# A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks

## by Aksel Sandemose

Translated from Norwegian by Eugene Gay-Tifft

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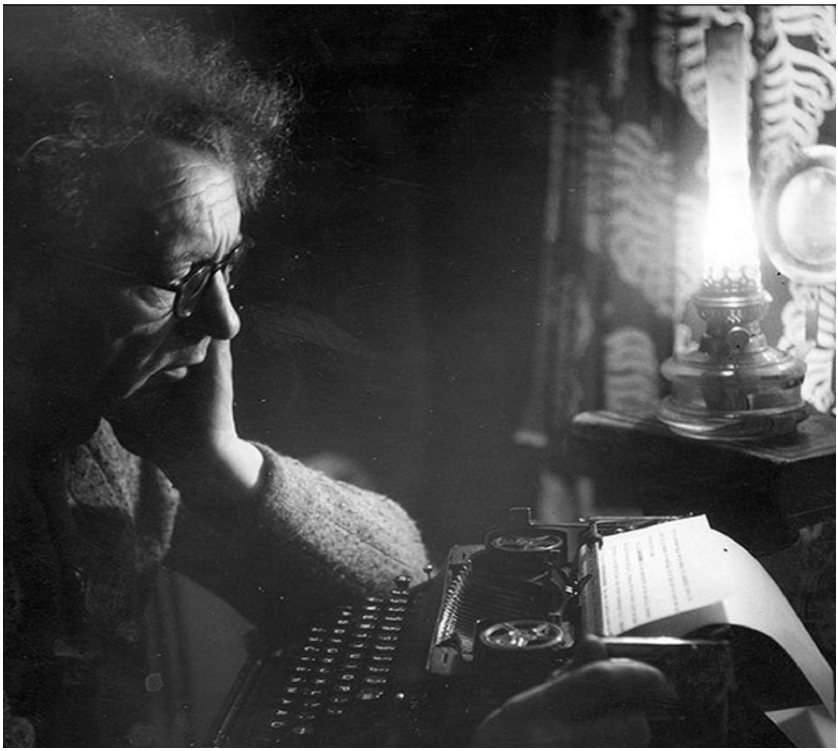

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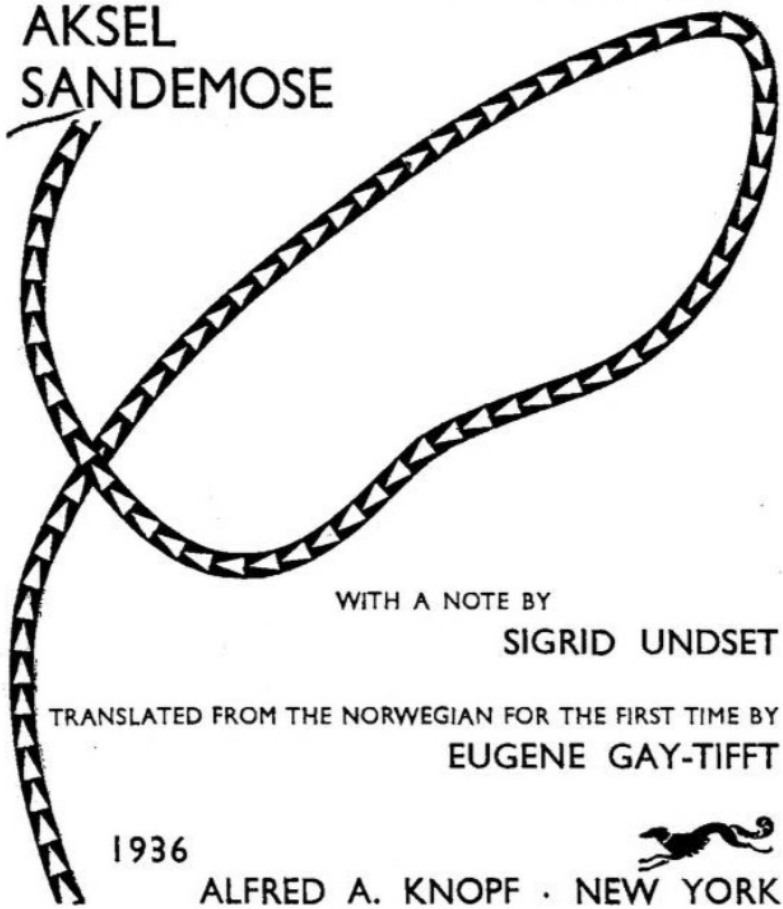

WITH A NOTE BY
SIGRID UNDSET

TRANSLATED FROM THE NORWEGIAN FOR THE FIRST TIME BY
EUGENE GAY-TIFFT

1936
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# A NOTE BY SIGRID UNDSET

SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO ESPEN ARNAKKE killed John Wakefield in Misery Harbour on Newfoundland. Ever since he has been a fugitive from his deed. In the soliloquy of this strange book he retraces his steps all the way from Jante, the small Danish town of his childhood, to Misery Harbour.

He killed John Wakefield because the elder man had taken his girl from Espen, who was a mere lad at that time. But the real reason behind that reason? In a fury of seeking Espen is digging for the roots of his own being, to lay bare the forces in himself and in the world that shut him in — that he hurt himself against and reacted to in fear and frenzy, submitting to it, revolting against it. The working people's world of Jante, with its petrified humanity and iron laws. Suppression of anybody that would be otherwise than everybody else, sneers for anybody who imagined himself to be something, a religion of fear and suppression, the grownup's revenge upon children for their own frustrated childhood they were Jante laws. The children's ambitions got killed, the children were horror-stricken at the sight of the deformed and miserable who had not conformed to Jante, the sexual impulse from the beginning was entangled with notions of fear and inferiority. Roaming through time and space, Espen tries to unravel in a passion of research the web of his own life.

For he finds Jante everywhere — on the prairies of Canada, in the United States, in Jutland and the Norwegian countryside. Through shifting pictures of his ups and downs, as a sailor, watchman in a museum, lumber-jack, farmhand, and what not, he finds Jante everywhere, where the fairy-tale of youth as a time of happiness is discovered to be a lie by sensitive minds.

There might be other aspects of Jante. — Espen Arnakke also remembers that mountain in Newfoundland which he travelled round on a hunting trip. "It was curious to observe how entirely different such a mountain could be each time I had walked on a little way and turned to look at it again. A thousand different

descriptions of Halfway Mountain may be presented to you, and all will be equally accurate... but the one who lay in chains on the ground saw Halfway Mountain only from the spot where he lay."

A Danish psychiatrist defines a normal child — that is, a child with sufficient mental health to adapt itself successfully to adult life — as a child who out of its childhood memories will retain about seventy per cent pleasurably accented. To judge from the latest literary memory of childhood, it would seem that normal children should be scarce today. However, I have scarcely read one that is written with the genius and weird power of Aksel Sandemose. The tale of Espen Arnakke and Adamsen's barn, which for him stood for the garden of childhood, goes a long way to suggest what is perhaps the ultimate root of impotency to master the troubles of our own times.

# A FUGITIVE CROSSES HIS TRACKS

NOW I SHALL TELL EVERYTHING. AND I SHALL HAVE TO begin with the end. Otherwise I should never venture forward to that page. It may also be necessary to do this for your sake, in the interests of orientation.

Once I killed a man. His name was John Wakefield and I murdered him one night seventeen years ago in Misery Harbour.

Many there were who became murderers in those days. The World War was raging, but that was legalized murder and meritorious slaughter. It was probably all one to the victims whether their murder had been legalized or not, but not so to the murderers.

I was acting under no authority which had put the Fifth Commandment out of business, and I have not yet recovered from what happened. I was from Jante and fully endowed with conscience. My hardest times have been nights when the dead man stood in my room.

I was too young to be able to lay the matter lightly aside as an incident which, however unfortunate, was closed and past repair. It has governed these seventeen years which have passed and has consequently set the course of my entire life.

I acted at that age we designate as our hot-headed youth, when we crow like a cock but yield more often than not to folly for the reason that we are in so many ways imposed upon. Childhood is fiery, and manhood too, at least in those whose youth has not rendered them sterile. Youth is the time of life when a man learns how to mask defeat and decides upon this or that false face.

# FAIRYLAND

I SHALL speak of a Fairyland now, and I have never done this before. Fairyland is the loveliest place I know. There was a row of ancient elder-bushes beneath which a child could hide, and before these lay a number of broad rocks bearing the dry stains of tar, for it was here that the fisherman Andersen would spread out his nets to dry.

The lady's name was Rose. For of course there was a lady in this Fairyland of mine, and it was a remarkable thing that her name should be just Rose.

And in Fairyland there was war. We had attained but little in the way of height, Rose and I, when we were four; but we lived intensely down there near the ground, like insects in their grass shadowed forest primeval. Hot and wild were the ways of our world and as yet we had felt no great need of the principle of absolution. It happened that our elders sometimes stepped in, and it also happened that we obeyed them, if only because they were so big. But, like injured ants, we would snap at the rod of punishment.

I loved Rose because she was so pretty and because she was of my own kind. As we played in the shadow beneath the elders, she would pay attention whenever I had something to relate. Grown folk never believed that I could possibly know anything they did not already know themselves.

Once I gave Rose some shiny picture cards. My mother had given me a whole pile of them and Rose was to have them all, the entire collection. She received them in her apron and I fairly danced with joy only to see them there. They were holy pictures of God and of angels.

The end of my affair with Rose came one day when I found her playing with some girls. My jealousy was aroused as I watched them. "The Devil!" I said suddenly, giving Rose a stiff look. For I knew very well that her mother did not like anyone to swear. Rose and all the girls stared at me. "Yes, you are naughty!" Rose said seriously. And it sounded as though this were something she had known all along. "We won't play with you! You'll never go to heaven!" So then I felt both stupid and reviled, and this was something new to me. I walked away with downcast eyes.

We no longer played together, she and I. Mother questioned me, but I was too unhappy to explain. Sin had entered the world. Rose had an elder brother who had shot a little bird. I found it one evening out in the garden and wept over it.

Rose and her parents moved to another neighbourhood. Later on we found ourselves in the same grade in school, but I never dared look in her direction. Everyone spoke of how pretty Rose was and of how well she deserved her name. Her gaze, whenever it fell upon me, was chill and calm. For many years I would go far out of my way to keep from meeting her. Her childish love-affairs deepened my sorrow. She resembled my sister Agnes, only that Rose was dark and Agnes fair.

But I was to learn more about woman later...

Into the house where Rose had lived a labourer named Kristjansen and his family moved. We all disliked the man. He would be home on time for meals like other people, but on his way he would clear the street of youngsters. We all feared that little gray man our elders only laughed at. “He never misses a meal!” Father would say as Kristjansen was going by. And with that, Father would utter a little laugh I did not care for. Kristjansen was living on charity and spent his time giving good advice to people who worked for a living.

He had a daughter and two sons. It was confusing indeed with these three children. Agnes, Espen, and Einer were the names of the three youngest in our family. Kristjansen’s three children had exactly these three names, and in their family, too, Agnes was the youngest and Einer the eldest. Those of us who had the same names were likewise of the same age. Einer Kristjansen was a boy I never could stand, for he used to take advantage of me in trade. Interest and capital return were principles I never seemed able to get through my head. But these Einer Kristjansen had in his blood, and by means of them he was able to cheat me. I refused to believe that anyone could resort to swindle and exploitation, but now at last I know better...

One day Agnes Kristjansen and my sister were sitting beneath the elder-bushes when Espen Kristjansen and I came along. We decided

with the girls that we should be sweethearts. Espen and I felt magnanimous indeed over giving each other our sisters. There I sat with his sister and he with mine, kissing each other quite unabashed. No one had ever taught us anything about kissing; it was as though the knowledge of it had been born in us. My mother never kissed me that I recall. Such things were simply not done in Jante. The way we sat there was perhaps the way animals come together in a joyous act of mating. I liked it. Even so, Espen and I stood up after a time with a strange feeling of something lacking. So together we slipped off to Adamsen's barn.

Those tar-coated rocks by the elders! They were the very heart of Fairyland. They breathed forth a genial warmth, for the sun was always upon them. It was there that Rose and I had held each other by the hand and pledged our eternal troth. But Rose did not wish to have any children, for just suppose they were to steal apples and so be deprived of going to heaven with us to live with God!

I was somewhat troubled, not by her views on birth control, but because she had assumed that God was good. I definitely did not believe that God was good. Mother had said that she did not believe in all this to-do about God, but Father said that maybe there was something in it after all. I was glad they saw it in this light, for I was afraid of God. To me, He was a sharp-eyed peevish person forever bound I should join Him in all sorts of matters which were anything but fun. I was depressed whenever anyone mentioned His name. Odd that anyone conceived of heaven as a pleasant place, and I dreaded my dying day, when I should perhaps be compelled to go there. Our neighbours Jens Hansen and his wife were a pious couple and they were going to heaven. But just imagine how awful it would be even there when they threw back their heads and sang!

Jens Hansen had a daughter whose name was Petra Lavinia. She died each year early in the spring shortly after they had got her back. Each year she would be laid in the same grave and the following year she would suddenly be back again in time for Christmas. No, it never occurred to me but that it was one and the same person; each year her name would be Petra Lavinia and each year she would find her way back into the same grave. But it was curious that she never grew up, and why did she have to spend all

summer lying in the ground? I took the whole thing to be something in the nature of an act of spring planting. Each time she was to be buried, Agnes and I would enter the house to view her in her coffin and receive a cake. That annual cake prevented me, as it were, from arriving at a satisfactory explanation of the Petra Lavinia mystery, for so toothsome a cake was enough of an event in itself. Each year Petra Lavinia would be given a new hymn-book to have with her in the grave; always it would lie beneath her chin. This was strange, for there was no one in her home who had anything of a voice in life, and it must have been pretty horrible out in the graveyard at night when Petra Lavinia sang. Father said that hymn-books were altogether too expensive to be put to such use. A little stick of wood done up in a bit of white rag would have done just as well, he said. I pondered how Petra Lavinia could sing hymns from such a stick wrapped up in a white rag. But there was so much in the way of white rags in the cemetery.

# PETRUS AND OLINE

MY oldest brother, old enough to have been my father, was named Petrus. I detested both him and his sweetheart, Oline.

Aunt Oline! There was a self-important hussy, ugly as sin. She had a repulsive wart on one cheek and she was always offended over something. We were all afraid of her. Whenever Mother and Father had received a letter from Petrus, they dared mention no word of it to Oline, lest she lose that evil temper of hers and burst out screaming again that Petrus was forever writing to them and never once to her. She would toss her head and refuse to look at the letter when one came, but if Mother were to conceal from Oline that Petrus had written home, she would somehow get to know about it all the same and would be all the more furious. The result was that Petrus seldom wrote to us, and Oline would never let us know how things were going with him; she would simply smile and put on a knowing look. Mother would always cry after Aunt Oline had been at our house, for Oline was never less than a raging storm of tears and resentment. It was beyond me to make out what Petrus ever wanted with such a woman. She tormented us all; she insisted that we were not refined enough for her and she made even Petrus

believe this of us. Her father, like mine, was a worker in the factory.

Oline had a mother with a disposition as vile as her own. Petrus wasn't refined enough for her daughter and we were, in more ways than one, even simpler folk than he. This was something I could never seem to understand, for among Oline's relatives one could count almost a dozen to whom no respectable person would even bow; some had been in prison and others had venereal disease. Aunt Oline would turn white whenever her own relatives were mentioned; but refined she was, at least, and we were very simple. It had pleased her to elevate Petrus to a higher level of being. She never had a friendly word for children and she was the Witch in Fairyland. On entering school I came in contact with a girl whose name was also Oline, and it always seemed to me that she exuded a stench of something old and nasty.

Once we went to meet Petrus at the train, but he left us to walk with Oline. I thought him a disgusting jackass. But such a fuss as they made over him! He wore a surly look. One time I saw him kiss Oline and I was downright shocked at the sight. To think of touching one's mouth to flesh like that!

My youngest brother died when he was only one year old. It was delightful that there could be something wherein Oline had no part to play. Mother wept and did not mind in the least about Oline, who sat staring, outside the circle. I got new shoes for the burial and enjoyed the funeral procession immensely. Mother became very quiet and cold after the little fellow at last was gone. She took me often with her to the churchyard. There she would quietly stand, weeping without a sound, while I slipped off to hide.

# THE BOY FROM JANTE

A FACTORY was located in Jante, and the town had a large population of labouring men. It was, on the whole, an impoverished town and, according to statistics, always had been. Located as it was, it had little to offer, but economically Jante was secure at least on its natural level. Neither good times nor bad affected its fundamental structure. Conditions were reflected merely in the rise

of some certain obscure individual and his subsequent collapse. Jante is a town of rural toilers. It is pleasantly situated, but low, and certain sections of it are subject to inundation during the autumn rainy season. Its environs are, in their way, extremely beautiful; a smiling, varied landscape.

So much I know to be true. But this is objective description, such as might be concocted for a guide-book and which, though free from the ballyhoo of the touring-club press-agent, likewise waives the emotional reactions of the individual. But for me it is the most dismal place in the world. For me Jante represents something wholly different — my personal relationship to a certain group of persons. Had I grown up in Arendal or Jönköping in contact with these same individuals, my attitude toward either one of these places would, I am sure, be much the same.

Through the streets of Jante, year after year, my father used to wend his way each day at exactly the same stroke of the clock. I was impelled to describe the town just now when I happened to recall my father. As a tiny tot, I would take his hand and accompany him a part of his way, as far as a certain corner. There he would loose my hand and disappear far off up the street at a point where there was a little yellow house which to me represented the end of the world. By the yellow house he would turn to the left and be swallowed up in the mystery of something vast that lay beyond. At an early age I arrived at some impression of the terrific size of the world, and a feeling of eeriness came over me when I thought of the time when I myself should have to go so far from home. So there was something even out beyond! My oldest sister had a job in another town far, far away. Whenever this came to mind, I would stand stock still and brood.

Here is something which can never be expressed clearly enough to give an adequate picture. It is the sight of my father in the street. He was not tall and his figure was somewhat bent. Never once would he alter his gait; always he would walk along at exactly the same pace, with the same length of stride, the same swinging motion of his arms. He came and went, came and went, and thus he walked through thirty years. It was thus that all the work-men walked there in Jante, the same expressions on their faces, year

after year, and after them came their sons. When the old man was ready to drop from the procession, his sons had already been a part of it for many years. Forth and back, forth and back, one way is as long as the other! How I have admired my father and the others, now in later years — simply for going on! As a boy I used to think: "How can you possibly stand it? I never shall myself!" But in retrospect I feel humble indeed in the face of such boundless patience. Men there were who had been keeping on thus for nearly fifty years, to and from their arduous toil in the factory, through youth, man-hood, old age, until they bowed their heads and added their names to the death notices. Did they ever pause to reason about their lives? When I see before my eyes this endless march of generations through that town of Jante; I can no longer stifle my protest, based as it is, in all probability, upon my ancient dread that so it might be for me, as well. For this is humanity petrified! The human being as a member of society in a community of superants, the blotting out of the individual, a dismal form of mechanized mass-existence, to the glory of the inanimate factory. It is Form's conquest of life, the ant-hill's triumph over the ant.

At all events, I see my father there in the street, a cog in the machine. Yet he did have a life of his own; he really did. The factory lacked power to slay his soul. He was the best and the wisest man I ever met back home in Fairyland, so gentle of nature that he still remains my model and my ideal.

It may prove difficult to identify the milieu from which I sprang. The classification "proletariat" fits the case most adequately, even though this term has degenerated into a mere political catchword.

I was one of a family of nine, but we children were never all home at the same time; the older ones left home before the youngest were born. When I was very young, Father was earning nine crowns a week, his pay later increasing from time to time until it totaled eighteen.

It is said that everything was much cheaper in those days and that people were more frugal then. The latter is in line with the current boast to the effect that people were able to get along with far less in the past — just one more of those infamies whereby the common people hold themselves down, a boast such as we ought, out of

regard for our own children, to consign to the realm of unreasonable doctrines. Today frugality is preached again. As for that, however, we may as well save our breath, for that person must be mighty indeed who today is not being flogged by actual circumstances into being frugal. Mean-while the globe, being so freighted with a superabundance of all manner of goods, is in very danger of losing its equilibrium in its journey round the sun.

But prices were also lower then? I shall rattle off no figures to prove it, but I state that prices were certainly high compared with the wages men then received. When Father was earning nine crowns a week, our family was living in a dingy hole (I have visited it since and I know), the rent being seventy crowns a year, the tenant to supply his own stove and heat. You can figure out for your-self how much each individual could allow himself for heat, food, and clothing, after the rent, taxes, doctor's bills, midwife, and minister had been paid. You may also reckon in the fact that men had to work twelve hours a day in those times.

But we had it much better than many others who were obliged to go the hard road to the department of public welfare. Father was never a day out of work, and Mother broke her back to stretch every penny as far as she could. With her needle, she would sit toiling over our clothes almost always until two or three in the morning.

I shall not, lest I be accused of later contradicting myself, pretend that I felt impoverished when I was small. Such was by no means the case. One reason for this may have been that nearly everyone we knew as neighbors was existing under the same if not worse conditions. The fundamental reason, however, was that we all looked up to Father and never for a moment dreamed that he could possibly be poor. On the contrary, there was frequent mention of certain poor unfortunates, and this implied that we ourselves were not poor. It was when I was about twelve that certain things began dawning upon me; I had begun to go out more and thereby acquired more material for comparison. And, with that, my course of reasoning became more divided, for it was impossible for me to give up the notion that my father was a great and important man. That we were proletarians I discovered first after we had ceased,

according to the fullest meaning of the word, to be precisely that, though we still bore the stigmata which all proletarians must bear — those marks which have been the determining factors in my life. The marks of the slave are so indelibly imprinted on a man's soul that it would certainly make but very little difference were he actually to be black of skin, like the slaves of the past in America — it was not his color alone that betrayed the fugitive slave. No matter what his color, he was bound to give himself away as soon as he found himself in the presence of his betters. It is said that in the early days of Australia the authorities could determine whether a man were a fugitive from some penal colony by rattling a chain in his presence. The former prisoner would receive such a shock at the sound that he would betray himself at once. Kipling has a tale of an English-man who had been in exile in Siberia; many years later he heard a command uttered in Russian and fell sobbing to his knees.

I tremble to this day whenever I hear the clanking of the chains of Jante, and turn my head like a snarling cur. It is thus that men behave who have spent their lives in chains, though they believe this to be the normal way for human beings to behave and are, in truth, unconscious of the chains which bind them. Many of those who strive to make names for themselves as proletarian writers are people of this order; they carry on in a disgusting manner, froth at the mouth, and rattle their chains for the benefit of a rabble of easily alarmed spectators, who first cast an examining gaze upon the fetters and later take the whole as a matter of sheer entertainment.

But boundless patience is necessary when the income of a family is the existence-minimum. Given the loss of a single week's pay or a single misfortune and the family goes hopelessly into debt or starves.

Once, during the Christmas season, my father's employer, one Sandness by name, stepped over to him with an air of great friendliness. Was there anything Father needed at home? A little chinaware or suchlike? Yes, Father supposed he could do with almost anything. Whereupon Sandness decided that Mother was to go to a certain store, buy herself goods to the amount of ten crowns, and instruct the proprietor to send the bill to Sandness, for

Christmas was now at hand and people ought to be thinking a little of each other. Father thanked the man, and Mother was overjoyed; she even dressed herself in her best clothes and ventured forth to pay a visit of thanks to Sandness, who waved his hand and strutted. There, there, my good woman! Did she not know it was Christmas, when one's thoughts ought naturally to be just a wee bit concerned with the poor? And Mother — she came home from the store and showed us all the things she had bought, and that evening our joy knew no bounds. The best of it all she saved for the very last — the news that she had spent only eight crowns, so that Sandness must now surely realize that she knew something at least about propriety...

Immediately after Christmas, Sandness began docking my father a crown a week from his pay until the eight crowns had all been paid back. The most dastardly part of it all perhaps was that he had spoiled the family budget for a long, long time to come. It was a problem in higher accounting for Mother successfully to distribute the loss evenly over a period of two months and cut down proportionately on food. For three whole years or more she kept out of sight her "gift" from Sandness.

Father knew that he was without remedy. He might lose his job, and Sandness would say that he had really only guaranteed the account. Sandness has heard something about philanthropy, but when the Christmas candles have guttered out, there comes a gray January, and what then has become of the Savior so blatantly advertised during December?

It is not possible to say now what Father's thoughts were, but I really doubt that he ever dared regard the villainy in its true light, for if he had, he would hardly have mentioned anything about it to his children. I was eight or nine when I heard of it, and with my own eyes I had seen Mother leave the house to go off to Sandness to thank him. It struck me with full force what thoroughly shabby treatment had been given to her and to Father —to us all, in fact. I looked dubiously at Father and felt my heart beating wildly. Had he swallowed it without a protest?

The only thing I own which came from the home of my parents is a little dish, a part of old Sandness's "gift." It is fairly pretty in design;

often I take it up and dream of my mother, who for years had it in her own hands so many, many times a day. It has become a relic, acting in a way like a prism, focusing within itself the lives of humble folk who bend their necks and suffer and who comply with all the laws which are placed in their way.

On another occasion Father was offered a piece-work agreement; several hundred small iron parts were to be given a certain shape, and Sandness had agreed to pay a half-öreapiece for them. Father asked two of my older brothers to help him, and together, in the most zestful of spirits, they worked one evening from seven until twelve and earned what they supposed would be a crown and a half. But the following day Sandness blew up. “A crown and a half in a single evening! I’ll pay you a quarter-öre-apiece!” And father had to be satisfied with that.

Father was paid seventy-five öre. But he said something strange to us that evening: “I don’t think that fellow Sandness has a very clever head. He had it all figured out that he could pay me half an öre apiece and still make money — and if I could turn out a thousand pieces a day, that would naturally be quite big pay for me, that’s clear. But the fire will keep burning in the forge the whole time anyway, whether I earn much or little; exactly as much coal will be consumed whether I turn out hundreds or thousands. Then why should he be afraid I might turn out thousands?”

The same principle which Father elucidated to us there at home had been understood and was actually being applied by another man far off in America. He has lost no money by it, either. But old Sandness was hardly a Ford.

Father had not been particularly unfortunate with Sandness as an employer, and there were no few persons who envied him his job. He even enjoyed one stroke of good fortune thereby, for when Sandness died, activities could not be carried on without Father. But then it was too late, altogether too late.

That we enjoyed no luxuries whatever there at home goes without saying. However, the term “luxury” is often employed in too loose a sense. I really am not sure where luxury may be said to begin. Fruit-juice soup and pancakes were luxuries for us; these were birthday

fare, on which our fancy would dwell throughout many a week in advance. That which I remember most vividly of our gatherings about the family board is the portioning out of our weekly ten-öre-sausage — a large smoked sausage like the German knackwurst — and later it went up to twelve öre. It was six inches long and one inch in diameter and is somewhat suspicious-looking to me even to this day — there was a decidedly acrid taste to it. Sulphur dioxide must certainly have been a vital ingredient, and Heaven knows what the rest of it could have been! And how our eyes followed every movement of Mother's knife!

"Father shall have the end piece," was her usual remark, "for he must go to work." Then, as there are two ends to each sausage, the other was certain to give rise to a lively difference of opinion, and there was always one who left the table firmly convinced that he had been ill-used. Mother took three-quarters of an inch of sausage like us others for her portion, but she never ate it. There was a paper-thin slice for each of us before we climbed into bed. "Just a wee taste," she would say, giving us the sliver of meat on a piece of coarse brown bread.

When Father spoke of the frugality of the past, it was always with an eye to the gluttony of the present. Hunger had been a constant guest in his home and there had never been enough sausage to go round. Sugar on the table or used in the preparation of food was an article he had barely heard of before he left his father's roof.

Somewhat similar to that it had been in my mother's childhood home, so they both knew the meaning of frugality. But Mother was close-mouthed about her childhood and we never heard anything about it. It was quite impossible to draw her out concerning that period of her life. There was only one incident: One Christmas morning her little three-year-old sister, left alone in the house, had tried to climb up to the smoke-hole. The house was a little one-room cabin with a smoke-hole cut through the roof above the hearth. The little sister's name was Ingebjörg. She fell from the smoke-hole down into a kettle of boiling water, and my grandmother found her there hanging over the side. For thirteen days Ingebjörg lay suffering in bed before the Lord, answering her mother's prayers, took the child to Him. I have since visited the

place myself, but everything there is much changed now. Mother went out into the world and never returned home as long as her parents lived.

It is strange to observe how all the children of my mother's family stayed close within the narrow limits of a century-old setting. And so did the children of my father's sisters and brothers, with the single exception of Father's youngest brother, who, whether accidentally or by design, married a Swedish girl — his children broke out of the circle. And there was Father himself, who married a girl from abroad, and his children broke out of the circle. But all the others, both on Mother's side and on Father's, married people within their own narrow circle and bowed to the Law of Jante.

As a child, I never went hungry. I did not come to that until later, when I had only myself to thank for it. But that I suffered from improper nourishment is a matter of certainty. Out among strangers we children lost all self-control when we glimpsed food different from what we were accustomed to at home. I stole certain articles of food when I was a child, but this was in no way due to that very restricted physical condition we call hunger — though what is hunger, really? Is it only the fact of an empty belly? When a pregnant woman eats charcoal and lime, it is not because she has use for them — that is to say, she is hungry not generally, but departmentally hungry, one may say.

I made no god of my belly, as the phrase goes. As for eating, it was about like this with me: Aside from the fact that we were supposed to eat food, we also competed for it; the others were not to have anything one could not have oneself. And without food one did not feel very well. But food lay heavy on the stomach; one developed a sluggish and bloated condition, with a little giddiness and belching. "Food-pleasure" was a term our school-teacher Fröken Nibe had made up, and warned us against. However, I consider it a practical symptom that we take pleasure in the food we eat, for it leaves room in our minds to think of other things. Only articles of exotic flavor attracted us when we had a coin in our pockets.

One of my brothers once squandered two öre on cinnamon alone.

My greatest felony in the matter of food in those days was,

humorously enough, not in the slightest degree dishonourable, although it did cause me to assume such strength of independence that I felt thoroughly ashamed of myself. I consumed a whole sausage entirely by myself, both ends and the middle. It so happened that I had found a ten-örepiece on the street and, with my heart in my mouth, had run straight to the butcher's and bought a full-sized sausage for my own private use. I hid it under my blouse and raced off into the woods, where I concealed myself and sat a long time staring at my sausage, filled with admiration for myself and at the same time suffering from a decidedly guilty conscience for refusing to share my treasure with the others. Think how grateful for it mother would have been! No, sir, not for ten or even twenty öre would I permit myself a noble gesture! This sausage was mine and mine alone! Meditatively I bit off one end and gnawed my way toward the middle, my head fairly spinning with shame — just think how many slices it would have made! A noonday meal for eight persons! Nevertheless, another thought also kept flaming before my eyes: Here at last was one sausage which need not be cut up and divided!

The number of us there at home always varied some-what; the older children went off on their own, and at length came the day when only the old people remained. And not so long afterwards they both passed away. We have never all been home together since the time the youngest was born. Some of us have not seen each other for almost twenty-five years. The feelings we Harbour one for another differ to a vast degree — perhaps it is precisely because we are so remarkably different that I have often found myself wondering if brothers and sisters are not possibly less kin to each other than to those farthest removed from their family. My own hunger for catastrophe, it would seem, is something in which I have been alone.

# THE WHISTLE AND THE CHURCH BELL

NEVER have I heard so beautiful a sound as the ringing of the bell from Jante church. I have heard it since of a still night far off in the

heart of America and I have heard it out at sea. But a long time has elapsed now since last I heard that church bell at Jante. To hear it during a summer evening there at home was the pleasantest thing I knew, and I was sure that every evil spirit must flee before its tones.

But there was another sound which was not pleasant, which was like the evil spirits' defiance of the church bell. It was the morning whistle from the factory. It broke into the raw mornings of winter like a howl of some infernal dog, and it hung like a mist of rain over the most sparkling mornings of summer.

The day began with the fumbling about of someone in the dark. Little coughing sounds as someone hunted about for his clothes and got himself ready to face the world again. A rattling of the kitchen stove and the serried sounds of coffee-making. Then came the first beats of wooden shoes striking sharply against the stones of the street, and there in the dark we could tell just who was passing. Always the workmen would pass along the street in the same order; every day the advance guard was exactly the same. Father was not among the first to go to work, though he was sure to be one of the first to rise from bed. After he had finished his coffee, he would station himself in front of a little mirror and there he would remain standing for some time without moving at all; he would carefully study his face as though he had awakened each morning with a new perplexity as to who he really was. I have never been able to convince myself that he stood there admiring himself, though often we used to tease him about it. There was always a singular musing look in his eyes as he stood there thus.

Then we heard him leave; his footfall would mingle with those of the others and fade out in the distance. Within a full minute after Father had departed, the noise of the wooden shoes would reach its highest pitch; then it would die down, though the tempo had increased, and the rear guard came on at a run. At precisely the moment when the factory whistle rent the air over the sleepy town, the last stragglers would come thundering by with still time enough to arrive at their work, for they were allowed a few minutes' grace. The first time, the whistle would sound forth one long, lugubrious bellow; afterwards there would be three short signals, which were even more doleful to hear.

I have always puzzled over the unfailing precision of all these different workmen. The man who went to work five minutes early did so his whole life long, every single day, five minutes early. And the man who was one minute early never varied from his schedule, either; every day for forty long years he would be exactly one minute early. The poor devil whose fate it was to be a half-minute late was as bound by his habit as any of the rest; he would come spurting along with his tongue hanging out of his mouth, exactly a half-minute late every day for two full human generations. Thus it had to be. The general scheme of things was not to be improved upon. Later on in life made abundant discovery of how much better it is for one to be early rather than late, and thus begin the day in a calm frame of mind, but I never remained anywhere long enough at a stretch to develop punctuality. The foremen always regarded me with no small amount of scepticism because I believed I was something, which I plainly showed by putting in my appearance, as an exception to the rule, with varying degrees of tardiness from one day to the next.

That brutal factory whistle which heaved its avalanche of sound down over the town each morning I have always regarded with dread and detestation and with a singularly gnawing melancholy — for it was not only tyrannical; it was also sad, and always it would end its screech with a mournful falling complaint. Its lacerating mission in life early awoke in me a spirit of protest against everything requiring a definite moment of approach; my nature is still such that my first reaction to a formal invitation is no. And for this very reason I have attended the theatre but twice during my entire life, for there on the billboard appears a definite hour when the curtain rises and it has always seemed to me that the personnel of the theatre must be a downright brazen group. But the movies in America appealed to me; they offered no intermissions, the performance was continuous, so that one could go in whenever one felt like it and see the first of the picture last.

# I KEEP NO DIARY

ONCE I kept a diary. That was long ago and, naturally, there was nothing in it. I imagined I might achieve coherence in that way. But

memory and the vital coherence I am in quest of are not to be founded on any day-book. There is every reason in the world to rely more upon the brain itself than upon the mere scratch of a pen.

Surveying the problem fairly, it is obvious at once that the diary merely tends to distract. What we write down is purely fortuitous. Taken as a whole, the result is neither truth nor poetry. A man commits himself to beliefs he has actually never held, and once they appear in black and white, they fill us with such shame that our desire is to flee from it all. Sealed, signed and settled are all those things which are deepest and grandest and so on, until the writer is up to his ears in a maze of self-contradiction, without courage to reject a single statement. And so it is that a man does violence to his memory; he forgets or remembers in the wrong places, loses the power to discriminate between the essential and the non-essential. He destroys the power of his brain to accept and reject, for this the brain does best away from paper.

It is a spirit of lamentation that dwells in diaries. As a rule they are commenced with the coming of the age of puberty and serve directly to preserve the adolescent way of thinking.

It is something other than a verbal diary I desire to lay before you. If the result of my attempt should prove in any way unique, it will not be because of subject-matter involved. The strange thing is that I should be telling you this tale at all. It is not a rare tale in itself — life will recognize itself in it. For there has been nothing so very unusual about my own career; in the main it has been the career of many an outcast from Jante even before my time. The unique element in it is the changing which had its beginning after Misery Harbour and ends with the ability of the outcast to describe just who he is. I should like to hammer it into your head so that it will stick, that if you decide for a minute, as I go along, that I am reporting anything strange or unusual, it is only you yourself who know too little about life. I shall chat with you only about common everyday matters.

# THE BOYWHO WAS STUPID

EARLY one summer evening, six or seven years ago, I was sitting in a cafe in Copenhagen. It was still daylight, and the door to the street stood open. Out-side on the sidewalk a man was pacing up and down and peering into the café. Then all at once I recognized him. He was Kristoffer Watch, the son of a machinery distributor in Jante.

Kristoffer Watch I had hated and feared for many years. He was a member of refined society there at home and was two or three years older than I.

I was nine when I hired out to a man named Larsen who had a harness shop. I spent a year in his employ and I clearly recall the filthy courtyard I had to sweep each day. Fru Larsen's two dogs kept littering it with their yellow dung. Aside from this my duties consisted in running errands with a hand-cart. In the back room off the shop sat an old man mending harness. Once I asked him a question and he said: "Only the gods know that." So he believed in more than one god, did he? This identified him in my mind as a freethinker.

My work with Larsen came to a painful end. One day I was sent to the station with two packages — a large one and a small. The packages lay in the hand-cart and I was given the money to pay the transportation charges. Larsen gave me specific instructions that the large package was to be sent in one fashion and the small one in another. This I did not grasp at once and he therefore went on to explain that the large package was to be taken to one office and the little one to another office. Presumably this meant that one was to go by mail, the other by express. I missed the point of distinction, however, for he had made me nervous and excited and had uttered several caustic comments on the subject of my general intelligence. Leaving him still angry with me, I started off with the cart, my mind in perfect confusion. The station — was that the place where things were sent out of town? I made my way to it. There they relieved me of the smaller of the two packages and told me to take the other round to the freight-shed. Hoho! Everything seemed to be working out splendidly; I had had not the least bit of trouble delivering each of the two packages to a different place! Life wasn't as difficult as it had seemed. But — they gave me back twenty-five

öre as change, and what could be the meaning of that? Larsen had said he was giving me the exact amount.

I trotted back to the store and put the cart where it belonged. But what about those twenty-five öre? In the counter there was a crack leading into the cash drawer, and through this crack I dropped the money precisely as I had watched Larsen do himself, and by this token I regarded myself as already a full-fledged business man. It was childish, I know, but children are sometimes childish.

Several days passed. Then Larsen took me aside and questioned me concerning the packages. He was furious. He was a tall heavyset man. He was very angry indeed. I stood there all broken up and miserable, but comprehending nothing. He yelled something about a man who was expecting his package and had not yet received it. You idiot! Then there must have been some money left over?

Oh yes, there was.

Twenty-five öre.

Where was it, then?

I had dropped the money into the cash drawer.

I looked at him. He was terribly angry. It was not until some five years later that it came to me that he had believed I had kept the money.

He said that I could go home and that I need not return to work in the morning. I was not certain what he meant by this. It was late evening when I first realized that I had lost my job. And then I wept.

What Father had to say to Larsen I really do not know. But he came home the following evening and laid down some silver money before me. “Here’s your pay I went after. You can keep this money yourself.”

There was a crown and a half in silver, an unbelievable amount for one to possess. On all other occasions our entire earnings had to be turned over to Father. I had received two crowns fifty per month

from the harness man. My next job paid me four.

Some people believe that the child labourers of the proletariat, such as I was, go about with much self-respect and a full understanding of money. Good heavens, work was nothing less than a terrible disgrace which had been heaped upon us — and a scorching hatred for boys who could go out and play after school and who were free to do as they pleased during their school vacation. All we ever got was a genial smile from our employer when he learned that our summer vacation was at hand. Ah yes, that's splendid, now that we've so much work to turn out!

Under such circumstances we were prompt to realize how lowly was our position and how little, if at all, we were to compare ourselves with the children of better folk. But the latter was just what we did. And upon this the proletarian's hatred of work is predicated. He sees other boys playing and enjoying their freedom. He himself is chained to his job two hours before school and four hours after. Time after time my brother Janus had to be called for at the bookstore where he worked —brought home and put to bed by father at twelve midnight. Is it any wonder we hated work?

But it isn't like that any more, people say. But that is what was said to the last generation and the generation before that, and that is what will be said to each future generation to come.

How shall a child see ahead to the fact that life's goal is the making of money? His ambition is to sneak in a few of the pleasures he finds his fellows enjoying. Childhood decides the course of manhood, and the proletarian hates work for fifty long years of his life, until he stoops to perform it and has a long string of youngsters behind him to lift the curse from his shoulders.

But some are able to wriggle free. And the years pass for one as well as another. I sat one evening reading the papers in a café in Copenhagen. And then I spied Kristoffer Watch...

Kristoffer's father with his machinery business and old Larsen with his harness shop were men of refinement and close friends. So Kristoffer had probably heard all about Larsen and his unfortunate errand-boy. I was walking along the street one day when Kristoffer

stopped me; he was standing there with some of his charming friends —boys, like himself, who were not obliged to wear wooden shoes, and clothes all patched and mended. Ah, so I had been fired from my job, had I? Why was that?

I was unable to utter a sound. I merely looked with anguish at that circle of sarcastic faces.

“Oh well, I suppose you were too young,” Kristoffer said — and with that he turned his back on me. “And too stupid,” he said over his shoulder. Whereupon he resumed his conversation with those other boys as though I no longer existed.

Ashamed, I stole away...

And now, after all these years, he was entering the café and making straight for my table. His hat was in his hand. Ahem, perhaps I didn’t recognize him?

I glanced up. No, I didn’t believe I did.

Ahem, but anyway we were from the same town. Kristoffer Watch of Jante.

Well, well! Yes, of course, I remembered his father, who dealt in machinery.

Well, it was this way ... not that he wished to seem obtrusive ... but ... out of work, you see ... and now that he saw me ... well, after all, we were both from Jante…

He got two crowns.

I nearly went mad with joy after he had departed. Take that, you Kristoffer Watch!

But I was downcast and filled with shame when I returned home that evening. My joy had been so tremendous that it had burned a hole in my soul. The truth is, I do nothing in moderation. I had rejoiced clean through and through, down to the level of my own infamy. I sat up far into the night with a splitting headache and experienced the same feeling of misery I had that night many long

years ago when I realized that Harness-man Larsen had fired me. I had experienced almost the same thing once before with another boy in my class at school. I shall tell you about that some other time; it was an even more sorrowful experience, but it was earlier in life and I had not reached my present depths. Now I viewed myself as a bloodsucker, an animal thirsting after revenge, with never any other thought save this: Revenge! Revenge! Now I saw my own dreams of revenge, now I perceive something of what had made me into a fugitive, made me what I was. I had evened scores with Kristoffer Watch, but I had rejoiced so over my revenge that I also saw myself fall...

And then I saw another man, a man who had met his death in Misery Harbour. Who was he? Why did he have to die?

It is said that a human being cannot be other than he is. I believe this to be true. Never can we waver from the rails on which we run. But additional acres of the soul may be put into cultivation, so that the individual will appear to have changed. I became another man because I had been granted the opportunity of tossing Kristoffer Watch two crowns.

# FATHER, SON, AND GRANDFATHER

As I sit at home and listen to the prattle of my children, I often think: “Am I not exactly as blind as my father was, and his father, and his in turn?”

I hardly think so. At the age of nine I was a little man marketing his labour. But when I pause to consider the tiny infant souls now entrusted to the care of Gjatrid and me, I recoil from the thought of sending them out to earn their bread.

My father considered us proud to help support the family. He said as much. But Father had been obliged to go to work when he was six. He had shared a bed with the hired man on the farm where he had worked and as a consequence was tortured with crab-lice. At

three o'clock in the morning he had had to get up and go out with the geese, and he told us how terrible it had felt to be dragged out of his bed by the hair. Once even this did not awaken him and he lay still fast asleep on the stone floor of the servants' hall. Thereupon the hired man had struck him over the head with his wooden shoe.

Father believed that times had improved since those days. But his own father had said the same. And am I not repeating a similar belief in my turn?

Father said that no children of his should ever have to go out and work at six. No, we might wait until we were nine!

I imagine that father took refuge in the thought that he had done more for us than had ever been done for him, and that he was a better man than his father. He was well poised and always cheerful. He had never received any regular schooling, and therefore his thirst for knowledge was always keen and alive; he read much, particularly history and geography. I know I am not mistaken when I say that he was intelligent. When he was forced to give up reading, as he did, I believe it was due to his defence: A man should mind his work! This he construed in the most primitive sense. Grandfather had been none too fond of regular work, and two of father's brothers had inherited this paternal failing; they had stagnated completely, and only Father and his youngest brother had been able to keep their heads above water.

Two precepts formed the core of my father's philosophy: a man should mind his work and leave alcohol absolutely alone. I believe that he was in so many ways bound by this doctrine that he might have got on farther in life had he not clung to it so inflexibly. However, no middle course ever existed for our family!

Grandfather was an inventor. One day he went into town with bed-feathers stuck to his shoes. He was drunk, of course, and was making his way forward by means of a series of mighty leaps, a howling chorus of youngsters at his heels. Father became furious at him and tore the feathers from his shoes. Grandfather had been "out with the star," a cardboard star inscribed with certain characters and attached to the end of a staff. With this in his hand, he would

go singing through the streets. He had a little workshop where he drank and worked on perpetual motion. This principle continued to haunt both Father and me. In three generations we have many times almost invented the machine of perpetual motion. One of my cousins on my father's side has invented one, but is too distrustful of human nature to reveal his plans.

Grandfather's brother was also shrewd; from Florida he sent home plans of an invention which would prevent disaster to a ship forced to navigate through drift-ice. Oh yes, this, too, was dependent upon the inevitable bed feathers — an enormous fender made fast to the prow. Mother was pot an inventor; she maintained that feathers would offer too little 'resistance in contact with mountainous ice. Back through Father's family I trace my own lack of self-discipline as contrasted with the Jante-demand that each one should think and act precisely like all the rest.

Ah yes, Grandfather would go out with the star, and Father, as a small child, would have to pass the cup the beggar's cup. Many a time has he told us how humiliating that was for him. Often people pushed him away. Once when Father had brought up the question of his future, Grandfather had flown into a rage and said that there was no occasion to complain so long as a man had a right to charitable support in a prosperous community. This was also a point of view for which there was some degree of painful justification: Grandfather was a partially disabled war veteran, but he was in a constant wrangle with the government over the pension he had not received for many years for the reason that he had once written that he was able to continue at work — which was a misunderstanding. Originally he had been a miller, but he could never remain long in one place, for the reason that he was forever introducing the most remarkable improvements in the milling process, and furthermore because his capabilities had been diminished by half ever after a grenade splinter had brought him down during the battle of Fredericia. There was one remarkable invention be had managed to produce in his time — an enormous rat-trap in which the rats were flogged three times before they finally hanged themselves. More, he once constructed a horseless carriage which was certainly a forerunner of the automobile. That was the most incredible vehicle in the world. Nor was flying

entirely strange to him.

I can still hear my grandfather's joyous, unsentimental laughter. He retained his sense of humour and could laugh and joke right up to the last. I was ten or eleven when he died.

But although Father himself had inherited many of the old man's natural traits, he had seen enough to realize to what end the life of a dreamer would lead. He therefore developed in himself a formalism as rigid as iron and concrete, and he never wavered for a moment from it until there was no longer any need for it, when he sat aged and paralyzed in his chair, longing for the place which was waiting for him in the churchyard there in Jante.

Father was never irritable, not even at night after twelve long hours of toil. Often I would sit on one of his feet with my arms wrapped round his leg, with Einer or Agnes clinging in the same way to the other, while he would walk back and forth across the floor. Thus he would walk a half-hour or so each evening. And as he did so, he would give us of his life's wisdom, would tell us how Mother and he had got along in the past. And then —his voice was deep and just a wee bit hoarse; his words fell evenly from his lips; he spoke in low tones — it was just like being in church.

# OLAV TVILLINGSPRÖITE

I AM now going to tell you something which speaks volumes about my father. Mikkel Revehale and his son Olav Tvillingspröite were, of course, not known by exactly these names in the Church Registry. [1] But in Denmark, outside the church registry, folk have preserved their flair for popular nicknames as untarnished as it was in Viking times, and some of these are expressive indeed.

Olav! As a grown-up man he overran Jante with his bastard children.

Now he is living in British Columbia. A pleasant chap. He is the best-looking man I have ever known and for a time was my closest chum. He was strong and energetic. He became a fisherman. But erotically he was an idiot, complete and unexpurgated. He would

cry as though whipped with a lash whenever he was within reach of a woman. Come on, just once! No, he was like a character out of a fairy-tale. A sculptor once asked him to pose for him, but Olav refused. Later on he confided in me that he would allow no one to fuss with him. I can't imagine what impressions he must have had of the art of sculpture!

Olav Tvillingspröite lived with his parents in our immediate neighbourhood. His father, Mikkel Revehale, did nothing for a living, and his two sons, Olav and Henrik, supported the family. Their mother was a sorceress and had the evil eye. I liked her, however, for she was always kind to me and approved of my friendship with Olay.

When Mikkel Revehale died and Olav became the family provider, he forbade his mother to continue her fortune-telling activities, refused further parish relief, and inaugurated regular meals. Formerly the family fare had been limited to bread and margarine. This was well done on his part; he was only fifteen, but he had a craving for power and achieved it. His elder brother, Henrik, bowed to his will, his mother bowed to his will, and so did all the younger children. He worked hard and set the home back on its feet. When he even went so far as to pay the taxes, there were those who put their heads together and growled: "That Mikkel Revehale, he must surely have left them a fortune! Oughtn't the parish relief fund to have back some of its money?"

"No, not a penny," that fifteen-year-old boy had flung back. "You can go visit Mikkel Revehale's grave and settle that account with him!"

Olav's cold reserve in his role of family provider and his excitable erotic nature seemed inconsistent to me in their relationship one to the other. He would go off in a fit of almost feline passion merely in the presence of a woman, no matter who or what she may have been; he would whine and carry on until she either gave in or fled from his pleading. He never had a deprecating word to speak against a single woman in Jante.

Ludvig Olsen was another of my friends, but he did not care for Olay. I can see now that Olav was not sufficiently refined to interest

him. Ludvig was aristocratic and tubercular and his soul would be cut to the quick when Olav, with tears in his eyes and his voice trembling with emotion, would describe what a lively time he had had with Karoline or some other wench. Ludvig happened to be virtuously betrothed and, in lyric flights, he would boast of his affection. Olav and I were once discussing legs and in the course of our conversation casually mentioned those belonging to Ludvig's sweetheart. Then you simply ought to have seen Ludvig! In the first place, he knew nothing whatever about those particular legs. And in the second place, there were certain things gentlemen never discussed where certain persons were concerned. Finished! No, Ludvig was really disgusting, whereas Olav was not so in the least.

Through the years I have often wondered where Olav had acquired his deep reverence for my father. It appears to me now to have been something almost akin to love, He might halt dead in his tracks on the street and, with beaming eyes, gaze after my father. And often he might utter some little remark, such as: "My, but you've got a dandy father! "Indeed, there was a certain measure of similarity between the two. My father walked to and from his work more punctually than the clock, he never neglected anything, and even after a hard day he would perform odd bits of work on his own account evenings after supper. Mikkel Revehale, on the other hand, never did a stroke of work.

Also, in this connection, Father told me something shortly before he died: Early one morning he was on his way to work. Down the street came Mikkel Revehale and his two sons in a procession familiar to all in Jante. First Mikkel Revehale himself, with a long pipe in his mouth, and his hands in his trousers pockets. Behind him came the boys, eight and ten years old respectively, heavily laden with fishing-gear. It was cold, and Mikkel was taking long strides to keep himself warm, his pace making it difficult for the boys to keep up with him. He flew into a rage at this, turned round, and gave each of them a thorough thrashing. "Now, damn you, get a gait on!"

It was then that Father had gone into action! "It's you who deserve a thrashing from these little breadwinners of yours," he said. "But they aren't yet up to the job so just leave it to me to give you a taste

of what's coming to you!"

And with that he let go a drive at Mikkel Revehale...

Nothing could have shocked me more. Had my father done such a thing? Then, seeing my astonishment, he self-consciously added: "But of course, there was no one else in the street. No one happened to see it."

So that was why Olav was so fond of my father! So it was Father who had put him right as to who the family breadwinner really was! Thereafter Olav patterned himself after Vilhelm Arnakke.

This then was the secret of his father-hate, of the fact that, in spite of the blood-tie existing between them, he had sided against his own father. It was a blessing for Mikkel Revehale that he died in good time, for otherwise it is certain he would have ended as a doubled-up old man obliged to follow along behind with the gear whenever his son Olav Tvillingspröite might take it into his head to go fishing.

Mikkel Revehale and his son — there was simply another version of my grandfather and father. Had Vilhelm Arnakke recognized something of his own father when he had looked into the face of Mikkel Revehale?

[1] *Mikkel Revehale*, Michael Foxtail. *Olav Tvillingspröite*, Olaf Doublesquirt.

# LIGHTNING, A HORSE, AND DEATH

ONCE there came a thunderstorm and often have I seen my entire youth beneath that same black sky. It grew dark in the middle of the day, the birds fell silent, the chickens went to roost. There was not a breath of wind. People spoke with muffled voices. God the Father had something to say to Jante that day.

The darkness increased. I was standing out in the road where a

party of men were leading a dashing and glossy-coated stallion. When they were directly in front of our house, a lightning-bolt struck to earth with a flash so blue and blinding that I fell to my knees... When I recovered my senses, I immediately heard the sounds of a terrific commotion; only a few steps away men were wildly shouting. And then there came another sound — may I never have to hear it again! It was the stallion screaming. It tore itself free from its captors, galloped away, and disappeared. The thunder crashed. I howled with fear, for I was so pitifully small. Mother came racing outside, picked me up, and hurried back into the house with me dangling beneath her arm. In the doorway she halted and breathed: “Lord Jesus!”

From under her arm I caught sight of the frightful thing myself. In the street lay one of the stallion’s hind legs, burnt clean off at the flank. The severed flesh was black and dry, no sign of blood. There was a horrible hubbub in the midst of the storm which now broke with full fury; lightning clambered all over the sky and flashed to earth in patterns of flaming trees. And the thunder! Oh God, how I cried! A few minutes later the white flame split open the darkness in three, four, five places at once outside the town.

Men set out with rifles, and some hours later, several miles from the town, they put a bullet through the brain of the three legged stallion. But that amazingly lifelike leg lying in the middle of the road — ! The memory of it would cause me to tremble even after many long years had passed.

In the bedroom at home one of my aunts lay ill, and that same day she died. But already that morning the doctor had said that her time had come. I must then have been some three or four years old. This aunt had been very kind; she had given me a lump of sugar every time I had gone to her after getting into trouble with Mother. Once, too, she had given me two pennies. These I hid away in Mother’s sewing-machine in just such a place as to prevent the machine from operating. Auntie had a canary-bird which I used to tease when she was out. Then suddenly they told me that she had died in the midst of the storm and that never again might I go up to see her in her room.

I sat on the sofa beside my aunt’s little daughter. She was wearing a

cape with a fur collar. Then Ole Smed came down the stairs and through the house with the body slung over his shoulder. It was swathed in a sheet which hid it from view, and was as rigid as a plank.

My cousin threw herself down and hid her face against the sofa, sobbing as though her heart would break. I recall nothing of the funeral, but I do remember a short exchange between Mother and Father.

Mother said: “Vilhelm, you are just as strong as Ole is, aren’t you?”

Father doubted it. Not when it came to carrying.

“Oh yes, you are,” Mother decided. “You are even stronger.”

Father coughed and stroked his hair. “Perhaps,” he said, “but you must realize, too, that she was my sister.”

# AN IMMODEST GIRL

I ALSO had another aunt. Her name was Dagny. Her husband’s name was Frederik. They had a number of children, among them a daughter, Jensine.

Jensine — her case was so incredible. I hated them up there in that big world of theirs and I could have killed my Uncle Frederik. But I said nothing, simply stared at those great big grown-up people.

At sixteen Jensine was in service with the wealthy Olavsens, who had a place out in the country. The Olavsens expected too much of a maid, and not even on the evening of her sixteenth birthday was she allowed to go out with friends of her own sex. No, a virtuous maiden was supposed to sit home evenings and sew.

But at length came an evening when Jensine could stand it no longer and climbed out through the window. When she returned home, the window was fastened, and Jensine realized that her absence had been discovered. So she went out into the garden and drowned herself in the lily pond. Yes, that was the end for Jensine,

and by that token the Olavsens might know that they had conquered her. Olavsen had, some time before, let fall a word to Uncle Frederik about her, and after that she had become thoroughly tractable.

Aunt Dagny and Uncle Frederik believed in corporal punishment. The birch was forever whistling in their home, and during meals it could always be found leaning against the table at Aunt Dagny's side. When treating a major offense, Uncle Frederik would hold the victim's bare bottom skyward while Aunt Dagny wielded the rod. The boys ran away from home at an early age and never returned. Perhaps a hidden purpose was thus accomplished. And as for Jensine, no doubt she had realized what lay in store for her and, now that she was sixteen, had found this too much to bear.

In the morning they found her in the pond, for her long hair had become tangled in the lily pads. This was a wretched state of affairs for society people like the Olavsens, since it left them without a maid. But Uncle Frederik came to the rescue and brought Olavsen another of his daughters even before Jensine's drenched body had been removed from the grass at the edge of the pool. Olavsen's new girl was given an object-lesson as to what she might expect were she also to bring shame upon her family.

I wept a great deal over Jensine, who had been so kind to us youngsters.

A child must be chastised, Aunt Dagny always declared.

She was utterly unable to perceive how such treatment might condition that very child's future. It was only that he should be chastised. This stuck in her brain like a rivet. She could, however, exorcize disease and used an alarming amount of book chatter.

When Uncle was eighty years old and it crossed his mind at last that he himself had once been a child, he took a trip across the fiord to see the place where he had been born. That evening he returned home and, with much giggling, gave us a most singular account! "Ho! Devil take me if that wasn't the funniest thing that ever happened to me! My mother is still alive!"

Although he had been separated from his mother by no more than a two-hour journey, he had not seen or heard from her since the day he had gone out into the wide world some sixty years before, and for a long time had believed her dead. He himself has been gone long years now. But I sincerely hope that his mother is still alive and getting along fine.

# BEER

IN Jante there used to be a man about whom I could not for a long time think without becoming violently ill. He was the butcher, Paul Himmelby. At last I have him at a safe distance. How well I sympathize with the better type of prohibitionist who may have watched for a generation or two the career of some such rascal as he — a gigantic sodden bag of a man who slobbered all over himself, with a head like a rotten watermelon!

Once when I was sent out for some meat, Father called after me and said: “At the market, don’t you go near Paul Himmelby’s stall.”

I looked questioningly at Father, and then he said something which greatly amazed me: “Paul Himmelby pees on little boys.”

I was most unpleasantly affected and was quite unable to grasp the probable truth, that this was Paul Himmelby’s notion of fascinating sport.

Paul’s poor thin little wife used to wait for him outside the saloon every night for forty years; there she would stand, pale and tiny in her shawl, while the sodden customers of the place would come outside for air where she was standing, with never a thought in their heads but that there she was supposed to be. Perhaps she was trying to reckon up how much money Paul Himmelby had urinated away there in the corner outside the door. But wait she would; she stood there cold nights and looked up into the sky while Paul was inside conspiring with the gods of the keg. She stood there in the dripping rain like the ghost of her joy in living trampled to death some forty years ago. She stood there in the light summer night and stared at the filthy exterior of the saloon. And she would give a pale

glance at everyone who passed; oh yes, she would have to keep on waiting simply to prevent Paul from assaulting some little boys with that vile stream of his.

Then he would stagger home, mumbling the drunkard's nonsense, followed by that pale little figure of his wife. Had she and Paul ever been twenty and in love? Did not this stinking mass of depraved flesh ever feel a wave of disgust for himself when he awoke in the night and thought of his beastly body? Did he have to return to the bottle, did he have to befoul some little boy like the one who once had been brought forth into the light of day and given the name of Paul Himmelby?

# TEMPERANCE

THERE was set up in my home a taboo, and its name was Alcohol. Perhaps you do not believe this affected us youngsters? Of course it did! We became devil-worshippers because of it. There existed but one power on earth — Alcohol, and that was a negative influence. It had usurped all power and glory from God and Devil alike. With the coming of prohibition fallen humanity had thought to discover itself in Utopia, where streets should be lined with gold. All our ideals, all our dreams, wore the vestments of this religion of alcohol, this belief in a demon named Drink. The very struggle for existence came at an early period to revolve about this question of alcohol. Over my entire youth hovered the nightmare of dread lest one of my elder brothers should come home drunk. I depicted in my own mind the tragedy of that, its magnitude, irreparability. Pre-eminently beneath the yoke of King Alcohol are those who pursue matrimony. I remember one time during my early childhood when one of my elder brothers was suspected of having drunk a pint of beer. A depressing atmosphere crept over the entire house — an atmosphere of insecurity, dread. All night long Mother lay awake weeping.

And the older generation, they toil to this day to keep the terror alive; they tell of things they have seen, and strive to keep another age, another generation, down with holy dread by means of it. This much I can say for myself: when, at an early age, I yielded to

temptation and got drunk, if I did so out of any intent or design whatever, the fault lay wholly and entirely with the teetotalers and that devil-worship of theirs. All that chatter concerning alcohol was so overshadowing that in the end it succeeded in convincing us that all joy was the result of beer and whisky, or, as Albert Engström has expressed it: “All joy without spirits is artificial.”

The injunction against alcohol came thus to tower above the childish mind as an injunction chiefly against living life, which I believe it fundamentally to be. When this spirit of prohibition became general for me, it produced the wrong effect. I wanted to live and therefore I violated all prohibitions, one for all, and all for one.

*Thou shalt not drink!* That was the most important commandment in the Law of Jante! And when that was violated ...

The *Law of Jante!* That is of greater importance than the Law of Moses, which is the subject of our official belief. It was more pardonable to break two or three of God’s commandments than it was to crack open a bottle of beer. When I had broken the mightiest commandment in the Law of Jante, then it was mere child’s play to break all ten of the commandments given to man on Sinai.

But even the Law of Jante had its divergent sects, its mother church and its Protestantism, and each was as loathsome as the other. It was alcohol that caused the split. One crowd danced about an empty bottle, the other about a full.

Do you perceive that when the Law of Jante begins to creak, we are not far from Misery Harbour, where I killed John Wakefield? If you do not see that now, you will see it later on.

# AT THE BARRICADE

I FOLLOW more than one thread at a time; anything else is impossible, for life is not a straight line. I do not require that you see all threads simultaneously. But gradually you will begin to detect lines and meanings where before you suspected nothing, and which perhaps even I myself had overlooked. But I know that the

one who has the courage ruthlessly to review his life will manage at length to gather all the strands together in his hand, and it is then he may be said to have brought himself up to date. When I stand beside myself, when Espen stands beside Espen, then we mingle together and are only one. This is not metaphysics. It is the fugitive who has found life's single effective shelter.

# THIEVES, MINOR AND MAJOR

FOR a long time it was my belief that I did not know the meaning of hatred. This was, after a fashion, true. The vague modulated feelings I have, as an adult, experienced for a vast number of people could never be classified as hatred. But I had experienced it earlier in life — bright flaming hatred; and when I call to mind persons and situations from that period of my development, the old emotion will burst forth in all its original fury — only to evaporate. It may often sound to you as though I still give way to hatred as I used to do before. And there you may be perfectly correct, for I do so at the very instant that memory goads my tale. But my emotion soon fumes away. My passion and apparent hatefulness are only the reaction of the evil spirit at the moment of exorcism.

While on the subject of Kristoffer Watch, I mentioned that I should later arrive at a similar story which had its inception earlier in my life. Ole Espen Andersen was then of a carpenter in Jante. Ole Espen was a sweet little tow-headed youngster and he was my closest comrade before I entered school. But I always lacked self confidence in his company, for his speech was more refined than mine and he was always far better dressed. His parents were also rather refined. His older brothers and mine were bitter enemies. His brothers did not have to work as chore-boys. But in our own little world a form of peace prevailed. One day Ole Espen and I stood talking on the sidewalk. A crust of bread was lying there on the sidewalk, and this I kept kicking about with my foot. Observing this, Ole Espen ecclesiastically remarked: "The child who trampeth upon bread shall be punished of God."

I looked at him amazed and thought of Rose, who also made reference to God. Such was not drawing-room conversation where I

came from. One might, under certain conditions, say “the Lord,” but if anyone ever said “God,” he would receive a little look of annoyance and would squirm in his chair with embarrassment. I looked at Ole Espen and decided that I disliked him.

Then, one day, I took an apple from a garden with Ole Espen looking on. The effect was overwhelming. At first it seemed he would die over what he had seen, but he ended by racing into the house and screaming to his mother. She came to the window with that refined face of hers and called out something to me. I threw away the apple and fled, believing then that it was I myself who would die. I really cannot decide which is worse — the apple-thief or the one who runs screaming to his mother.

After we had attended school some year and a half, the carpenter Andersen was on the point of moving to another town. During his last day in class, Fröken Nibe said to Ole Espen that in the new school he was to enter he might tell them that he was ready for third grade —”Such a good clever boy as you are! Just tell them from me that you are to be promoted to third grade!”

I looked at Ole Espen and hated him.

Some sixteen or seventeen years passed before I was to bear anything further about Ole Espen. That was here in Norway one Sunday morning when I was on a short visit to one of my relatives in Honefoss. In the local paper I read about Ole Espen Andersen from Jante! He had been arrested in Bergen for burglary.

My spontaneous reaction was: “There, Ole Espen, take that for the apple I stole!”

I believe it is better for us to steal while we are of the proper age for it and to have it over with while we can. It is said in certain cases of thieves that their crimes were the logical result of their juvenile propensities for stealing. But such remarks are made only by hypocrites and those of frail mentality. Show me a person who did not steal when he was a child, and I will show you a person who will certainly steal today.

I must add that, immediately after reading the newspaper account, I

grieved for poor Ole Espen. It would have been better had he once been capable of a little apple-stealing.

The years had passed, I had not seen him and had had no opportunity to revise a childhood hatred — it had been simply "forgotten." No one, I trust, suspects me of desiring a man in state's prison at Akershus just because we were bad friends during early childhood.

The story moved me; I gave a good deal of attention to the problem of cause and effect and I have come to this conclusion: I became discreet in my taste for mischief and therefore it diminished as time went on. But I was not sufficiently mature to draw the line in Misery Harbour. I lacked both years and courage. These two elements I Came by later on, and then I met Kristoffer Watch.

# A HORRID PERSON

IN our garden, which was only a few meters square, there stood a pear tree which Father had planted. One autumn I went out to gather up the fallen fruit. I was between five and six years old. Out on the road was a group of larger boys — my older brothers and an older brother of Latterfrosken. [2] (There will be more about Latterfrosken later.) His brother's name was Kalle, and this boy had a face I did not like; it was pinched and pale, with eyes which were greedy and treacherous, a cur-like gaze which followed me as I walked about under the tree. Then he said with a dangerous sneer: "Look at that! He swiped a pear from the tree!"

The others berated me. I stood staring with open mouth and ventured no protest. When the incident was reported to Mother, she agreed I was not to be trusted. I could find no adequate reply and stood in terror of Kalle ever afterwards. I was shocked that a boy who, in my eyes, was grown up should accuse me of something of which I was absolutely innocent. As nothing had happened he might have been blamed for himself, what could have prompted his accusation? I reasoned it out for myself, and my logic was remarkably keen, far closer to the truth than I then realized. To shift blame from himself had been precisely his subtle intention. He

who looketh upon a woman to lust after her! Kalle had looked upon a pear and perhaps many other things. I took the blame, and my terror was further inflated. Of human beings one might expect almost anything.

[2] *Latterfrosken*, a nickname, literally: " Laughter-frog," but in Norwegian more pointed in its effect. — TRANSLATOR.

# THEY HANGED THEMSELVES

I AM approaching a focal point, a mental complex which has become encysted by this time; but I may break open the cyst and live over old rending pains and, before I have talked myself weary, I believe that both you and I will understand a little more about the psychology of theft. First there are two bits of documentary evidence which may be presented in a brief space, two black crosses which darken the skies of my childhood.

There was a certain housewife in Jante who was commonly known to steal. She was gentle and her eyes were those of an angel. Often she would hide herself away in some corner and weep. She did not steal anything and everything. She stole only bread, round loaves in particular. The local storekeepers were aware of this and made an agreement with the woman's husband: they were to keep an eye upon her and, were she observed to slip a loaf under her cloak, they were to let her leave the store with it and collect from her husband later on. I am sure these merchants never abused the agreement, their sole discreet regret being that the woman's opportunities for theft were limited. This was a good arrangement. But it happened that one storekeeper with whom she never traded one day caught her in a theft. Everyone was aware of her weakness, but this dealer was angry because she did all her trading elsewhere. He took the bread away from her and threatened her with the police. The woman went straight home and hanged herself. For it says in the Book: "Thou shalt not steal."

And then there was another story, a true replica of the first. There was a woman from out in the country who was arrested for stealing from a bakery. In her attic at home were found huge piles of dry

bread and moldy cookies. She was locked up in the Jante jail. That very same day she took off her garters and hanged herself.

I saw her husband when he came after the body that evening — a little gray-haired farmer. He had the coffin lifted onto his wagon and drove off home with his wife.

Life is less dangerous when one has learned to know oneself, whether it be in childhood or early youth. As children we are merely on the way to being men. The mature person thinks logically and in words. The motion picture is a return to the child's plane of consciousness, for the child is a true hallucinist. Is that perhaps a new word? It expresses my meaning precisely. Kleptomania preserves a hallucination.

# THE THIEF

FOR two years I was a newsboy. My regular route included a second-hand-store owned by a man named Ravn. ConcerningRavn and his wife there is an incident I must relate, inasmuch as I considered it somewhat in the light of revenge. Ah yes. The man had never harmed me in the least. It was I who had desired to harm him. I never succeeded, but it was for this I had my revenge...

I was fourteen and one evening I found myself at the movies. Near me Herr Ravn and his wife were seated. Then, suddenly, during a tense moment on the screen, something escaped Fru Ravn, something quite human, which served to distract us all. During the intermission at the conclusion of the picture a loud-voiced discussion arose as to who the pig could have been, and the younger element had many a witty remark to offer. The place where the film was being shown was simply one large room, and the situation included us all. The witticisms grew more and more crude and the boys began making sounds with their mouths. The horseplay got out of hand. From several quarters came sounds which were altogether too perfect as imitations. General indignation.

At this point Ravn got up and made a speech. Were there perhaps

certain ones present who fancied they were something? Did these perchance doubt that Fru Ravn was a well-mannered lady? But the fact was, she was ill; yes, that she was. In spite of her accident, due to illness, he trusted that everyone present would realize that she was a well-mannered lady — “I trust that no one is in doubt as to that, for in such a case ... yes, in such a case—I”

The last words were uttered with powerful emphasis. A minute later the hall was empty and Ravn disappeared with his wife. Then we youngsters returned and saw the rest of the performance.

This gave me a feeling of glorious revenge on a man who had never in any way harmed me.

Every day for two years I had entered his shop and laid his paper on the showcase containing a number of watches. Ravn dealt principally in watches. Among other things on the wall there also hung a row of ticking watches. There was never a soul in the shop, only the ticking of all those watches.

I had long experienced the desire to make Mother and Agnes each a Christmas or a birthday present of a watch. I had indulged in lengthy fantasies concerning this. Dainty little gold watches they were both to have from me, each with a long, thin gold chain to hang about the neck.

Every single day for two years I, a thief, had entered Ravn’s shop devouring with my gaze the watches in the glass showcase. Would I get my chance today? I knew how to open the door without a sound and would stealthily enter the shop. Each day I would leave the store almost in tears; No, not today, either! It was always the same old story, over and over again: No, not today, either!

I never stopped to think that no one would believe that I had bought them, were I to come home with such costly gifts. It was my intention to say that I had saved up all my tips, but I never went far enough to anticipate the logical question: Well, where did you buy the watches? I saw myself only as a fellow of importance. The end would have been catastrophe for me. The reformatory, no less.

Fortunately, Ravn never gave me the chance I was seeking.

However, my feeling of shame was as great as though he had. Why? Because the will to steal was as strong in me as it is in the successful thief. There is really something quite amusing and incongruous in this distinction between desire and accomplishment. He who looketh upon a woman to lust after her...

You will hardly be able to comprehend my suffering during these two long years, this burglary I lived through day after day, yet never managed to commit. But during these two years there was founded much of the present fugitive, that frightened, scowling creature who still leads a shadowy existence within my heart.

# THE WATCH AND THE MURDERER

SOME time during my twelfth year a murder occurred on a farm a few miles outside of Jante. The dairymaid was found in the cow-barn with her throat cut, and pressed into the gash was a watch. The hired Man was arrested and confessed to the crime. He was unable to explain the watch, but when asked if it had been to stanch the flow of blood, he answered yes. The defense attempted to introduce this as an extenuating circumstance.

The man escaped from prison a couple of years ago and made his way to Canada. In Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, several months ago he was hanged for the murder of a fellow-trapper. There was much in the case which remained unsolved, the evidence simply revealing that the two had spent one winter together trapping furs far north in the snow country and that the victim had been found with a bullet in his body. The murderer confessed, but claimed he had acted in self-defense. Presumably the judge reasoned from the first murder to the last. I wish, however, I might have exchanged a few words with the convicted man before they strung him up.

# SIN, SINNERS, AND SCAPEGOATS

WHEN a boy had misbehaved but was not sufficiently mature for the institution, he was whipped in the town hall, with his father and two public officials for witnesses. God knows whether such a boy has ever developed into a human being.

Writers have experimented with fiendish characters. But I doubt that it lies within the author's genius to create a more pernicious fiend than the unwitting individual. Early in life I discovered that the finished Satan must be stupid, as dull of mind as an Uncle Frederik. Never has there existed a single soul willing to move heaven and earth to prevent an offense. To the whipping post! My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth to this day when I recall my terror of that!

"To strike fear and provide an example" the act was performed. We were, to be sure, frightened out of our skins, but the example accomplished nothing. One individual was tortured and all the rest became sick with terror. One individual was broken for life and all the others were carried toward the same end. We knew —every last boy of us there in Jante knew — that mere chance might bring us there. Into those who had stood at the whipping-post had been instilled the terrors of hell, but none of us ever became the better because of it. Kristian Flaskehals spent almost his entire life in the house of correction; at intervals of a year or more he would remain home for only a couple of months before being sent back again. Father would nod soberly: "Oh yes, that Kristian; already as a child he had to be taken to the town hall. A wicked fellow." A fine bill it was the state thus had to foot simply because a half-dozen sadists once had decided to authorize this form of entertainment. Jante has never had any trouble in providing itself with scapegoats.

The "Institution" was a forbidding blot upon our horizon. We regarded it exactly as would a regiment of soldiers condemned to decimation by the drawing of lots. To whom would the lot fall? I retain one picture from my schooldays; often I go back and examine each face: this one, and this one, and this one… the lot might have fallen to all of us, to every single one. But the day will come when more will be done for children. What one considers is now being done for them is first and foremost to the gratification of a personnel appointed by the state. One still laughs at schools where

the child himself is given some authority. Some day laughter may have another goal.

# THE CHILD AND THE RIGHTS OF PROPERTY

DO not believe in any form of society which does not, to a certain degree, recognize the rights of property. Nor does anyone exist who, practically or theoretically, would seriously propose its total abolition. A certain framework of inanimate objects is necessary to human existence, and this implies a right of use which is identical with the right of possession. This involves a whole list of things: clothes, tools, books, and other articles in addition. No one must be allowed to trot off with a pocket-knife which is mine.

But in a society where everything is owned by persons, the rights of possession have assumed such holy proportions that the worship of God Himself is shot through with it, and thus the fact is forgotten that the child is no thief, but rather an individual who simply has as yet much to learn. The man who assaults a child because the child is not mature is a vandal, though this by no means indicates that physical punishment is inevitably the result of an evil intention.

We stole. We rivaled each other in theft. Georg Holm was a playmate of mine contemporaneous with Ole Espen, but later he moved to a distant quarter of the town. One day he showed me a whole sack of apples which he and another boy had stolen. Seeing them, I went off by myself and wept. In the face of so brilliant a stroke, I gave Up all hope of equality. He was aware of this and there-after scorned us openly, we who lived on another street: Ho! Small fry like you!

Although our sole sin consisted in the fact that we were at a developmental stage of existence, as each adult has himself been at one time, there was certain to ensue a fierce and bewildering panic each time it was discovered that some boy had behaved as every boy has behaved all down the eternal ages. Just think of the unholy rumpus set up by school-teachers and folk of their sort simply over

the theft of a few apples! Well-bred people, making a steady practice of dashing off after the police! And not until some deed had been reported to the police had we, for the first time, in our own eyes, committed a serious offense.

Harald Pedersen, one of my companions, had a quarrel with a girl in the schoolyard and uttered a foul remark which, however, was witty indeed. Harald had always had a fairly keen sense of the grotesque. But the girl tattled and never shall I forget the scene which followed! The girl was a “teacher’s pet” — the kind who are forever flattering and crawling with politeness to the teacher and who are always up on their lessons. Ow, ow! The meeting in the teachers’ room! The shrieking of female voices! A child was on the downward path! ... Harald was hauled around like a calf, cross examined and hauled around again until he couldn’t tell his right hand from a wagon-wheel. At length he was birched in public to the tune of the whole classroom’s huge delight and the awful screams of the victim. One teacher wielded the birch rod and thereby enjoyed the enthusiastic and undivided attention of the pupils, while another teacher merely stood by to direct the procedure.

Now, how could those teachers have nourished the thought that Harald Pedersen had ushered sin into the world? Ah well, but they were right! The child ushers sin into the world in each single generation, for “sin” is simply a stage of development. They become utterly horrified, these school-teachers, when they encounter their own dead youth, and this they attack with fire and sword. And for us this attack served to divide the world into opposing groups — little folks and big folks. The little folks were unfortunate, for these big folks had never been such as we. They themselves had never been small and justice always lay on their side.

# BETTER FOLK’S CHILDREN

EVEN before this, I had felt small in my relationship to Georg Holm, and things steadily went from bad to worse. What was the matter with me that I should always appear the baby in every group? So I was in fact at home, and outside the family my status suffered no change. After confirmation Georg entered the world of business,

and the line of demarcation between us was then complete. Thereafter he associated exclusively with shop-clerks and fellows of like refinement. If he ever greeted me now, it was with the utmost condescension of manner. This is a curious Jante attitude, but it is a familiar one, for I frequently detect in the works of certain authors the shadow of an inferiority complex in regard to the shop-clerk, whom they flay mercilessly in their books or treat with a towering irony. When I was alone on the street, I would shy from passing such a person on the sidewalk. I would feel myself shrink into a midget at his colossal approach. The boundary line was such that the grocer's apprentice found himself very nearly in the same category as we, probably because he was obliged to appear about town in his overalls pushing a delivery cart. The dry-goods-store apprentices, on the other hand, were so elegant that they just about crushed one to fragments. After these came the barbers.

Georg Holm! How was it that I should feel inferior to him at the time we both were small? His mother was a widow and a washerwoman. She could not, therefore, have been the cause of it. At any rate, the fact remained.

How Fru Holm ever managed it the Lord only knows, but her six children were always better clothed than we who, though there were nine of us in all, had a father who was both diligent and thrifty and a mother who was both these and more. Georg's school lunches were more elaborate than mine. And yet Fm Holm had never had to go to the parish for aid.

At all events, Georg and his sisters and brothers were more elegant than we, and so was his mother, too, it seemed. But Georg's almost vicious dislike of his teacher and his elders was of a piece with my own. The following incident lies far back in my life; I could hardly have been more than three at the time. Fru Holm said to me: "Go blow that nose of yours!" And with that she dragged Georg into the house. A little later she and Georg went out. Then I sneaked up and made water against her door. Georg Vestby Holm! This he wrote in all his books, and how I envied him that name! Our teachers regarded us as students of equal capacity. We received the same marks and always sat together. This was always at the head of the class, just why I can't say, as I, for one, never studied my lessons.

My impression is that the class as a whole must have been rather dull and that our exalted position was a matter of small significance.

Several years ago, in the course of a flying visit to Jante, I happened to encounter Georg Holm. This was the first time we had seen each other since our transitional years, and I recall clearly, with remarkable clarity, the astounded expression on his face as he looked me up and down. “Say, but you do look smart!” he said.

Quite likely I appeared somewhat astonished myself. Only as a callow youth had I ever striven to appear “smart.” But after we had parted company, I was obliged to stop and look at myself in a mirror. Aside from a pair of gray spats, I was really quite plainly dressed, though it is true there were no holes in my clothes where no holes should appear and my suit had been built by a tailor.

Georg’s amazement was so vast and so naive that he exclaimed: “I say, but you do look smart!” This indicated that his mind, which for years had held to one opinion concerning a certain individual, had been suddenly forced to yield that opinion in favor of a new one — which was worth as little as the first. There had been but one battle-cry on the lips of the poor widow and her children: Elegance, at all costs! Georg had become a dry-goods merchant. The true meaning behind his gasp of astonishment had been: Oh, so now you are refined, you too!

He was disturbed to discover that the Espen Arnakke who had always been such a simple fellow had at last gained enough momentum to cut an equally dashing figure.

# THE FASCINATING MAREN

SHORTLY after I had entered the first grade in school, I heard at home that a workman named Gren had hanged himself several years before. I was in the same class with one of the man’s daughters, a little girl named Maren. I became colossally envious of her because she had had such an interesting father. However, my envy was tempered with admiration so great that no thought at all

of revenge ever entered my head. It was with the deepest reverence that inquired of her one day if it were really true, this story about her father...

The lord have mercy on my soul! Once again I experienced life as a vast and complicated and most curious machine. When one has chosen it as one's vehicle, it is inevitable that certain rare and unexpected consequences should follow. It was unbearable; first I received a beating from some older girls who pulled my hair and threw me down and trampled me underfoot. I was unable to comprehend this treatment and reasoned simply that such was life. But then I was turned over to Fröken Nibe to be formally punished by her, was later brought before one of the masters, who added his laying on of hands. I was dragged around by one ear, placed on exhibition every. where as a most abominable rascal, and each fresh interview involved a new and worse spanking.

This was neither the first nor the last time I was forced to experience such an ordeal. I developed a deadly fear of everything as yet untried, for it was absolutely impossible for me ever to predict what the reaction of grown folk would be. It was always most difficult where one's good faith lay in question. Then the sparks were sure to fly; then they would breathe forth fire and smoke, and justice would stalk with eyes aglitter. The price one paid was a good sound licking, with certain embellishments thrown in for good measure, such as a brutal tweaking of the ears. I can still feel the severe and deep-seated pains with which my head would be afflicted after such an ordeal. But even worse than that was to be struck sharply over the nails with a ruler.

# THE MASTER ROSENVINGE

WHEN it came to punishment, the invention of new and varied forms of physical torture, the master Rosenvinge excelled all others in school. The pupil whose name he happened to call out would immediately grow weak in the knees. What would he hit upon today?

Rosenvinge's one redeeming quality lay in the fact that he was free

from all inane pedagogical theory, so that, once surviving his fearsome exterior, one would be able to feel at least some degree of comradeship with the man. He was in no way restrained by any fear of being attacked by the Socialist newspaper. As for the other teachers, this public cowardice proved a downright wholesome restraint. We can imagine what conditions must have been in former times when the terrorism of the teacher in the classroom was not held somewhat in check by his own terror of outside opinion.

But it was impossible for me actually to hate this fellow Rosenvinge. There was little of the teacher in him, and in spite of his harsh manner he treated us more or less as man to man. He served us no moral pap and he never interfered in anything we might happen to do outside his classes or away from the school. He would let it pass were we to fail to greet him on the street or were he to catch us smoking. “Idiot!” he might say in passing. But never would he bring the matter up the following day in school, like the others, and there was no harm involved in merely havingRosenvinge call one an idiot.

One day a certain boy, in response to one of Rosenvinge’s bursts of fury, let fly a perfect flood of vile and vulgar language straight in the master’s face. The rest of us almost perished with fright. We anticipated little less than a murder before our very eyes. But — Rosenvinge simply sat down in his chair and laughed. There was admiration in his roars of laughter, and nothing further developed.

This made a deep impression upon us. We feared Rosenvinge, but hate him we did not. He was an excellent instructor for the reason that he never allowed himself to be trapped in any pedagogical corner.

# MASTER IVERSEN AND THE POLTROON

BUT it was otherwise with another of my instructors. To say that I hated him would not be quite accurate. The only thing I am certain

of is that I loved him. I realize that I appear in this piece as something of a problematic gentleman, and, likely enough, I have hated only those I have loved, never quite knowing which of the two elements predominated. Already at fifteen I had formed certain vague theories to the effect that hatred and love were identical, together a sort of hour-glass which could be inverted at will, the sand in one end being love, in the other hate. The persons one likes one hates, or loves, or both.

The man's name was Iversen. We had him in zoology, which was my favourite subject, and a splendid lecturer he was. The memory of my affection for him can still stir me to emotion, but the consequences of my attachment were hard to bear.

We were playing at robbers out in the schoolyard and I was fleeing with my hands tied behind my back. I tripped and, being unable to break my fall with my hands, I struck with my head full force. I sensed that something was wrong with my head aside from its exterior scratches, but I went home alone none the less. Outside the door I fell and did not regain consciousness for a week. My age was eleven at the time.

Iversen had been acting as playground director that day and perhaps he had received a reprimand. At all events, he turned against me from that day, and often thereafter he would assail me with brutal names of opprobrium. These he had never used to anyone before. He also struck me. But worst of all were the words he used, coming from this man who was the only teacher who interested me in class. Never had he had a more attentive pupil. My passion for natural history is a theme in itself.

There was one medal in particular he was forever pinning on my breast — Poltroon! And this he would fire at me under the most inappropriate circumstances. He knew very well how it stung. I cannot, even to this day, comprehend how, in an hour-long class in nature study, a boy can possibly give evidence of cowardice. With my heart in my mouth, I would sit there waiting for him to call me that name again. And he never failed. Was it precisely because he once had frightened me and afterwards abhorred me because of it — abhorred himself because of it? He had always given me good advice in the matter of my collection of insects. But I never referred

it to him again.

Upon his entering the room, I would hide behind the boy in front of me or would simply not lift my gaze. I trembled in his presence. I comprehended very little, only that the situation was highly unpleasant.

That experience struck deep in my heart. The memory of it continued to haunt me.

Then came a day in the middle of the Atlantic; it was storming and we were under easy sail. The gansail had long since been taken in, but it had been made fast improperly, I imagine. It had slipped down from the yard, and before I could reach it, it had broken out. Here was a difficult and risky business; the sheet was wet and was flapping like some gigantic bird. The vessel was rolling like a thing accursed. I made my way outward in that damnable whirl of sail which hammered at me from every side, succeeded in spraining my left wrist, and thereafter wasn't worth a sour herring. But give up? No, that was impossible, you see, and for any number of reasons. In the first place, I did not wish to give up; in the second, I was furious at that wretched sail; and, in the third, , I would only have been chased aloft again. But my fourth and most urgent reason was that, glancing below, far down there on the deck of the ship half-buried in water, fighting her way in the wicked weather, I saw my old teacher Iversen! So he had called me a coward, had he!

It was not to be expected that anyone should thank me for my efforts. Good heavens, no! That would have indicated stark madness on the part of the skipper. I had simply performed my duty as a seaman. Nor did I receive a single word of praise. But when once more I had the swaying deck beneath my feet and was still somewhat giddy after my trip aloft, the skipper came over to me and said: "Perhaps you'd like to relieve Laurits at the wheel?" The form of that command — "Perhaps you'd like" — that was the feather he had thrust in my cap. And when I went down to supper that night, the cook gave me a look of man to man. Without papers I had been signed on in Canada. Before this incident my comrades had long nourished strong doubts that I was in all ways a sailor; until then they had had no basis for opinion.

I know but a single individual who has openly recognized the fact that he is lacking in courage. Such an attitude is in itself, of course, brave, but I consider it wrong, none the less. This man traffics in women in Copenhagen. This is an isolated example and perhaps it is over' enterprising to generalize from that, but I really do believe that most wise is the man who proves his courage before he has had time to recognize his cowardice.

# HE CRIES IN THE NIGHT

FOR some years I cherished a desire — it is now dead — but once I desired to own the kind of chain one sees in old portraits of noblemen — a golden neck-chain. It was to slip under my vest or down into my vest pocket. I also yearned for a massive thick gold band to wear about my wrist — nothing ornate — simply a heavy and severe band of metal, forged about my wrist, never to be removed — I had devised this as a mark of distinction. Kings of the Viking period had worn such bracelets. It has been established that, through my father, I am a direct descendant of Gustav Vasa, but that is nothing to me; let others boast of their ancestry. If it happens that I am descended from Gustav Vasa, the condition of his present family is anything but flattering. I should prefer to be a Gustav Vasa and found a line of my own. Further-more, genealogical tables are always stupid affairs. If Gustav Vasa had a concubine, it is equally certain that he had lackeys.

It is three or four years now since I suddenly gave up my desire for a necklace and a bracelet. Why? Because of handcuffs and a noose. And my memory of that youth, a murderer, who once made his way stealthily through the forest from Misery Harbour…

A night and a day had passed, and then it came night for the second time. That boy spent the night sitting at the foot of a tall pine tree. It was raining. He looked with wild eyes at the night. He looked at the snow which lay about him in living patches. Drops fell from the trees. It must have been midnight by then. The haunted hour. There was no solace for his agony of alarm. So at length he rose to his feet and screamed, stood clinging to that ancient pine and let his screams peal out across that desolate country. In the throes of a

hysteria without limits or aim he called out to himself. He screamed and be screamed: “I am Espen Arnakke from Jante. I can’t die. I am Espen Arnakke, the greatest person in the world, and I can never die.”

The night was unperturbed. And when he had no longer any voice left, he could not be sure he really had screamed.

Have you ever seemed to hear someone calling you through the night? I have, frequently. The last time was in my cabin at Fagerstrand.

At such moments I fain would sit awhile and whisper something to myself; I sit quite still and whisper, and pray that peace may abide with all the innocent. If I am too greatly disturbed over the voices, I hum a little tune, a snatch of some innocent song of childhood. For I know that victory lies with him who can journey home to childhood.

It is this I am for the time being attempting. I am reducing myself down to what I once was. The person I am today remains, like a little light, standing outside myself. These polished “grownup” people, they are really not grown up in the least. They are the lamentable batter of development assuming the expression of faces. I am a man who goes about in my finished house putting away the tools of construction; I polish the windows and remove all ladders and scaffolds. A house is intended as a dwelling. Most people are but walking museums, and there are those who believe that this is as it should be, making life more interesting and giving authors something to write about.

# THE ZOOLOGIST

I SHALL tell you the tale of a zoologist who lived once upon a time and had the name of Espen Arnakke. My career was ruined and it was Jante that ruined it. I might have become a zoologist had not Jante barricaded the way. And had that not happened, I should never, one fine day, have found myself in Misery Harbour.

This zoologist is dead man number two in my life and he was slain

in Jante through no fault of his own, stabbed in the back in his fourteenth year. It might also be said that, so many stood about chuckling to themselves, he really died of their glee.

Through the years I have attempted to revive my interest in zoology and though, of course, it still exists in a sense, it has nevertheless cooled considerably. I possess a few odd books on animals, but I seldom if ever glance into them. Strolling through the woods, I may stand and look long at a squirrel, a bird, or an insect — and these must give me some pleasure, else I should never pause to regard them — but I no longer burn with a desire to possess the squirrel, the bird, or the insect. I no longer aspire to their lives. Formerly, with the arrival of spring in Asker, I always managed to collect a few fledglings and keep them in a large cage on the veranda. But I did so under compulsion: I knew the pleasure they ought to give me. But that had only been true and was so no longer. The birdlings would remain with me and thrive for a week or so, but then I would let them go.

I have a very early recollection of a creature which another boy and I once encountered out in the road near our house. I know precisely when this boy moved from our neighbourhood and can therefore compute my age at the time fairly accurately: I was two and a half years old.

It was something quite incredible which appeared on our tiny horizon. Something never to be forgotten.

We were standing under the elder-bushes when We spied the creature approaching. It was not to be associated with any other thing we had ever seen or heard of and numb with fright, we fled. Nevertheless, we were immediately obliged to turn back. The monster was ambling along at no more than a snail's pace and certainly we should be able to get out of its way if necessary. It was a large green larva which seemed to me at the time to be all of a foot long and easily two inches in diameter. It had a long, curved horn sprouting from its head, and its movement was steadily backwards. Obviously a bundle of malevolence, and Johannes said that it was a demon. We stood at a safe distance and scrutinized it, but then, suddenly seized with a bold and warlike spirit, we picked up stones and flung them at the monster. A little pebble struck it

and made a gouge in its side, whereupon we backed farther away and bombarded it in full earnest. It writhed and struck out and indeed looked frightfully dangerous. We kept on throwing stones until it was both dead and buried. Then we went to find Rose and boasted manfully of our encounter with a dragon and of how we had laid him low.

My early impression of the creature's size was, of course, erroneous. It was really about two inches in length, with a corresponding thickness. Our belief that the grub moved only backward came about because the possibility of a posterior horn had never occurred to us. It was, I believe, a poplar hawk-moth in the larval stage, as there were both poplars and osiers in the vicinity.

Shortly before entering school, I found a worm in the garden at home, four inches long, but as slender as sewing' thread. It had rings at either extremity like the rings on a rattlesnake's tail. It was by rare accident that my eye had caught sight of it, for its protective coloration bad rendered it almost indistinguishable from its native earth. I put it in a bottle of water, and there it continued to wriggle about for two full days without showing the slightest sign of expiring. I cannot make out how in the world it managed to exist under water. Then it disappeared; how I do not know, but it was never possible for any of us to have anything undisturbed. Two full years later, I still found myself bemoaning the loss of that specimen. What had it been? For many years the problem haunted my mind. I have been to this day unable to identify it, though I have been through an ocean of books on natural history and scrutinized no end of plates.

Hanging out in the woodshed I had long rows of wasps' nests. These insects which lived together in a social community deeply fascinated me and I never tired of studying them. Their nests might vary greatly according to the character of their location; most frequently they would be found hanging close to the ground from the limbs of some spruce, but sometimes they would be located high up in the tree. There was an astonishing number of them in a little spruce grove near town. The entrance to the nest lay at the bottom and the shelter consisted of layer after layer of paper with hexagonal cells inside. The wasp has a full-fledged paper-mill

within his tiny stomach. On old board fences one finds them patiently chewing tiny slivers into pulp. I found certain nests as large as a human head.

It was a feat fraught with peril to carry home such a wasps' nest. It was a downright damnable experience to be stung and, naturally, I was stung rather often. Moreover, it was trespassing to leave the road which ran through the woods. The warden there was a terror.

Long could I stand lost to the world in study of the community life of the wasps after I had found some nest, my eyes following every move of the dangerous little fellows who glittered in and out of the entrance. Ah, but the boy would show these pompous wasps a bit of human audacity! He made off with the whole show!

When I set my mind on having a certain wasps' nest, I would take a sharp knife and make my stealthy approach, seize the branch with my left hand, make a lightning-like slash with the knife — and dash away for dear life. For a half, sometimes threequarters of an hour I would wait at a safe distance, perhaps even going down to the beach for a dip in the sea, until the wasps had settled down again. Then I would draw near in the same stealthy manner, grasp the severed branch in my hand, and leap off — ten, twenty paces, or until I was stung and drop it without slackening speed. This procedure was then repeated another time or two. As the wasp is known to fly by certain well-established routes, the whole swarm would gather back at the spot where the nest had formerly hung and would, as a rule, continue their building operations there. The nest I would then carry home. The result was always the same: the wasps which later emerged from their cells would be in no way dangerous. I have hung up a wasps' nest in such a way that it was possible for the life-cycle within it to resume its natural course. But it never would. The young wasps never flew out and refused to react when I broke open the nest. They would stalk about in the ruins, sun themselves, and eat up what food was in storage. When I tried to stimulate such a wasp with a straw, it would become greatly confused at first and would then crawl off and hide, but to fly or sting never seemed to enter its mind. From this I observed that it was perfectly content with the only conditions it knew and was simply sad because I had disturbed it. It whirred its wings a bit

and sought rest and rest alone.

Such experiments occupied much of my idle time, but bear in mind, please, that this was in Jante. Such things were only for schoolboys. I was tortured to give them up after I was fourteen. I tried to keep on for a month or two after confirmation, but at length I gave up, although I had a large and well-preserved collection of insects which contained no few rare specimens. In the loft, the year round, I kept any number of jugs and bottles filled with larvæ or pupæ. The larvæ were fed regularly every day and I followed their development with ravenous interest. And how I loathed the ichneumon fly! No sooner was I convinced that I had reared an excellent specimen than I would find it breathing its last, with parasites swarming all over it! You may be sure I was not long in putting my bottle of benzine to good use, for after all there is a limit to one's patience!

I persisted in certain experiments which have afterwards amazed me, for I was only ten when I began. There was nothing new in these experiments, except that they were conducted by a ten- or twelve-year-old boy of the labouring class there in Jante, a child who was searching for the origin of life and whose only qualification was his curiosity. A more modest goal could never have contented me and I was on the right track, if any track may be said to exist.

Larvæ from the same brood I subjected to varying environmental conditions; some I undernourished and left in the cold, others at the same temperature were given regular rations, others were placed in a moderate temperature, while still others were subjected to excessive warmth. Upon some I forced an abnormal diet. In many cases I was successful in producing fully developed individuals of irregular size and coloration. I took mice and so paired them that their ultimate descendants turned out to be some of the strangest-looking mice ever seen in Jante. I likewise experimented with birds. Once I had a little white bird which was the result of crossing an ordinary male sparrow with some variety of small silent caged bird, the species to which it belonged being still unknown to me to this day.

My life since those days is the story of a person gone wild. The

period lying between my fourteenth year and the present is a vast, blind interregnum. Now for the first time I have taken up the thread again. But not as a zoologist. They used to look sharply askance at zoology. Never-the-less my curiosity is something of which no one has ever been able to deprive me. Who? From whence? Whither? These questions have been branded into my very soul, and if enlightenment was denied me at the end of one road, it meant only that I retreated in order to strike out on another.

*Naturam furca pellas ex* ,

Yet she'll be back again, the hex!

Zoology gave way to psychology. And psychology, too, was a road to understanding, and it was more — it was a knife in the hand of the runaway thrall from Jante. They trampled my dreams underfoot, but I am a boomerang which returns to smite them.

Psychology is the weapon of the thrall.

Over the woodshed at home there was a little space where I was allowed to keep pigeons. I also kept tame rats there, though they were isolated in a wire-netting enclosure, since even tame rats are prone to dine on squab. There were species both pure and hybrid, three mice and many varieties of birds, black thrushes and sparrows which put their heads on one side to glance at me as they pecked at the grain in my hand. For certain squabs I would chew up grain and teach them to take it from my mouth; later they would come jabbering after me and almost call me mamma. On growing up, their old habit would remain. Down in the yard they would respond to my whistle by flying down and fighting for a perch on my under lip from where they would eagerly ransack my mouth for the, corn I had placed there for them. On rainy days I would sit on a box in my pigeon-loft and take stock of my creatures. Hour after hour I would sit there and feast my eyes upon a baby rabbit silently nibbling away at a cabbage leaf while the rain played soft melodies on the roof. I had a secret place for apples, an ingenious little cache behind a pigeon's nest.

It might be that my children would say "No, thanks," to an apple. They had the strength to decline. I had not. For me fruit was like

the symbolical apples which grew in the Garden of Eden: I was forever thirsting after it. I recall the thrill of excitement I never failed to experience upon gazing into an apple orchard, and I remember my painful hours in school as I watched Fröken Nibe gobbling up fruit as she walked to and fro in the classroom. I remember the crunching sound as her teeth bit into an apple, I can still see her before me ripping the skin from a plum. One of us would have to carry the skin and the pit from the room, and how that boy would lick at it as soon as he was outside the door! Thirty pair of eyes would follow Fröken Nibe. One day her cupboard was broken into. Fröken Nibe was appalled and the sin involved in that deed has survived to this very day.

When I had apples in my pigeon-loft, then Paradise had been created once more, with all the creatures of the field and God the Father alone with the Tree of Knowledge, while the rain drummed and the pigeons were busy settling themselves for the night And there I would sit brooding over a considerable problem: There where the grub had gnawed its way out, why was there always a little leaf pasted on like a door? Or had the mother perhaps placed it there upon depositing her egg? I continued to turn these problems over in my mind as the darkness stole over my Garden of Paradise and the rats rummaged “round in their nests. Surely there were some jolly riddles in this world! I would solve this problem myself some day! Iversen, who was so wise, had said that mammals could not continue to exist in the absence of fresh water. But what about the whale, then? Had it provided itself with reservoirs of fresh water at the bottom of the sea, or did it perhaps thrust its snout above the surface and supply itself during rainy weather? I’ll clear that up myself, I will! Never again shall I come to you with my questions, Papa Iversen!

The world seemed brighter then than it ever has since. But the cost of achieving Paradise is dogma and ultimate expulsion.

Every spring I would soon know of countless birds’ nests. There would be telltale signs pointing to their location, and these I would slip from the road to follow, bent upon determining the number of eggs, the stage of development of the young. I would visit my nests each day, weeping with anger were I to learn that one or more had

been robbed. This happened none too seldom. I never disturbed a bird's dwelling. Well, yes — there were two instances, but in each the circumstances were highly unusual. Once during a severe storm my starling box seemed in danger of being blown down and it was my thought to brace it more securely. But my efforts wrecked it completely. There it lay on the ground, the eggs all broken. That was a sorrow, but what was my joy when the same pair of starlings, undaunted, laid another nestful of eggs!

And again: hanging on the wall at home was a single picture, the title of which was Spring. It depicted a woman standing by a fence. In her hand she held a neat full of gaping young birds, the objects of her smiling contemplation. I used to wonder if the lady were not cold, for she was, to say the least, but scantily clad — and why in the world did she stand there with the entire nest in her hand? Why? For years the problem harassed my mind' Quite possibly this was a common form of spring sport indulged in by the aristocracy and hazily I tried to conceive of divers persons of rank and position in the same situation, with the final and natural result that I determined to try it myself. I went straight to a nest I knew, tore it free from the bush, and posed with it in my hand in the very position of the lady in the picture, the same inane smile on my face as I gazed down at the young birds who, seeming fully aware of what was required of them in the tableau, thrust open their mouths and gaped. The next day they had vanished and my spirits drooped considerably. I hoped for the best, though I knew very well that it would be a full week before the birdlings would learn to fly.

The trail of the zoologist is obliterated. He did not weather existence; he was like a twin brother of mine who died when the world became too wicked for him. The zoologist was then reincarnated as a psychologist. But his past life was that of a little child far off in Fairy-land, a tiny white elf whose name was Espen Arnakke. He put forth his hands to all who were big and strong and implored them to love him. But they merely sneered at him. He never forgot, and I still hear the echo of his bitter sobbing.

It was he who murdered John Wakefield far off in Misery Harbour. It is he who will shake down all the apples from the Tree of Knowledge and conclude by felling the tree.

But if today I must answer whether I, as a psychologist, have discovered what was denied the zoologist to seek after, my reply may be almost anything — yes and no —and either reply will be equally true.

When, as a zoologist, I reached the end of my rope, I began laying in a collection of human personalities, and this I have continued to this day. This was proceeding along the same lines, but in a new and more significant manner. Deep within, it had always probably been but human life I had longed to decipher. As time passed, I learned to take my human collection less seriously, but to begin with I viewed it quite literally. I desired my human specimens in cages. This was against the law and beyond my capacity. Moreover, the human individual bulked large in a physical sense.

So I confined myself to realms of fancy. I pretended I had unearthed a colony of diminutive human beings, but breathed no word of my discovery. Nevertheless, I cherished the thought of reporting this at some future time, thus gaining renown for my finding. This was certainly evidence that the zoologist still lived, for it had always been my hope to come upon some species of insect hitherto unknown and thus become a subject of discussion in the naturalist press. Hitherto unknown! Ah yes, my friend, I was truly an ambitious soul.

It was necessary that these human beings of mine should be small so that no one else might discover them in my possession, yet they were, aside from their physical proportions, precisely like ourselves, though, being “wild,” of course they wore no clothes. I kept them in glass containers in order that nothing might take place in their lives without my full knowledge. I yielded to their desires only when it pleased me to do so, and when I became angry, I would prick the older ones with a pin.

With these individuals I could accomplish a great deal, especially when I pretended they were persons I knew. Here I could strut as master over grown-up men who were smaller than myself. I arrived at a stage of vast potency by reducing the size of all these others; I became their lord and master; everything developed according to my will, for weal or for woe. Everything they did was done in my honour.

My reading likewise underwent a change; I turned in particular to certain current speculations representing the crudest form of human curiosity: The Sex Life and Its Laws, Woman as Young Girl and Mother, What is Homosexuality? and like books of vulgar nature which are read in secret and cause one to ponder the problem of a free press.

This constituted a radical change in me; hitherto I had read only on animals, works which men of science alone delve into, and of these I had read a considerable number, even though they had brought me no closer to the solution of the riddle of life. By studying the arrangement of wing-veins I was able to establish the identity of a particular moth, though the last grain of dust had vanished from the wings so that no sign of distinctive coloration remained. My head was an impressive arsenal of knowledge concerning the various species and contained enough Latin to do for a doctor.

# THE LAW OF JANTE

BUT these were the very things which Jante disallowed, not by any means unconsciously, for this general attitude shone through every spoken word.

You have grown up in other environments and will never be able to grasp the inexorable effect of the Law of Jante. You will probably laugh at it and fail utterly to sense the deadly influence it had upon that working boy in Jante. By means of the Jante Law's ten commandments, Jante holds Jante down. And now you must hear them all:

**1.** Thou shalt not believe thou *art* something.

**2.** Thou shalt not believe thou art as good as *we*.

**3.** Thou shalt not believe thou art more wise than *we*.

**4.** Thou shalt not fancy thyself better than *we*.

**5.** Thou shalt not believe thou knowest more than *we*.

**6.** Thou shalt not believe thou art greater than *we*.

**7.** Thou shalt not believe *thou* amountest to anything,

**8.** Thou shalt not laugh at *us*.

**9.** Thou shalt not believe that anyone is concerned with *thee*.

**10.** Thou shalt not believe thou canst teach *us* anything.

Some of these commandments may perhaps be quite all right as they sound. But he who has lived under the Law of Jante during the fifteen years it took him to develop, who has come to realize its bloody emphasis and its hysterical thirst for power, regards these commandments very differently. By means of the Law of Jante people stamp out each other's chances in life. All struggle against it and writhe beneath it, but all heartlessly exercise it against all others. Because of it the people of Jante are godless, without first having become human. Each is nailed to a cross of his own and requires no Christian symbolism. There they all hang, screaming, their brows wet with bloody sweat, turning and twisting in pain, and hissing to their brothers in crucifixion: "Do you think for a moment that anyone bothers his head about you?"

The Law of Jante was not merely a set of laws, it was the very core of the speech of the people; all they ever said could be traced straight back to the Law of Jante. This is Jante: each little soul's struggle for coequality and recognition, never without consciousness that all the others are greater than he. With a decree gleaned from the Law of Jante every conversation was at length concluded, without fail! I remember the coffee parties! Words perhaps embodied merely in a glance, but none the less suffocating to us all, deadening the very air we breathed and creating an atmosphere which could nourish only dreams of revenge. Its effect was that of poison gas, slower. perhaps, but more heartless. It would poison the soul without killing it utterly. It had no windingsheet to spread over its victims.

In the ancient laws of the land and in the Law of Moses you will forever detect the spirit of the Law of Jante; from the Law of Moses, in particular, flow numberless decrees designed to hold the pack in

check. Obedience, modesty, respect — these are the virtues attributed to us when we have lived up to such commandments. The eighth commandment in the Law of Jante — Thou shalt not laugh at us — has already been sung by David: Let them be sore oppressed for their infamy, those who give me the haha!

But few topics could be discussed there in Jante, and these only if brought up by the eldest in the family, who would speak slowly over a sounding-board of incertitude, while all his younger brothers would sit about with down-cast eyes taking inventory of their hatred. Were they to ask a question, it would have to be to the accompaniment of much reassurance: Of course, we know nothing, but you who are so wise ... Then the reply would come from Olympus. For within that mighty reservoir information was always on tap: The opposite was unthinkable. But even if younger brother said nothing in return, often enough he would sit there laughing to himself at the information he had received. How may an individual ever hope to develop a soul in such an environment? How shall Jante ever be able to foster other men than slaves —with an occasional scorpion or murderer? What will our heavenly Father do with this appalling gang who will sit through all eternity with sour expressions on their faces on the point of exploding simply because they happen to catch sight of someone else sitting off yonder on another cloud and believing he is something!

In union there is strength. This united attitude rendered Jante successful in holding Jante down. How we suffered how we squirmed! All are equally big, but each must believe all the rest are bigger. This is the foundation upon which the town is built. It has become impossible for the individual to rise there — long years elapse before he discovers that he has been held down, if he ever dis. covers the bitter truth. The majority never do. They are the tireless toilers in the factory, men of the practical standardized worker type, men who have gone forth and returned regularly each day for three generations, until they can come and go no longer. The ant and the bee have consolidated themselves better than the human being, and with less hardness of heart. They create their distinct and vital types by means of systematic undernourishment, but we destroy souls with poison gas, accidentally, without rhyme or reason — no one goes unscathed, all must suffer and all do their

bit in the general gas attack. The Jante man cannot arise from his condition. Instead he bluffs. He bluf s the others into believing him as great as in reality he is, the whole time doubting this himself.

How may one describe the riots when kinsmen clashed in Jante? Not precisely by stating that we spoke the plain truth to each other. Never did we venture that far; we knew each other too well — and the hatred each bore for the rest. We uttered no truths, but held instead to the Law of Jante, the good old well-proven catechism with all its poison. That is to say, the younger element kept still, of course, but would release the poison whenever they dared and wherever it proved most effective.

And yet the truth was uttered at last — it was Petrus who dared the attempt after many years of wearing strife. He had thought, no doubt, of delivering one decisive blow — or, rather, I prefer to believe that he dropped the bomb by mistake! Either way, I can bear witness to the fact that there was a mighty detonation. Whereupon, we all got out our hand-grenades and flame-projectors as though by military command. In twenty seconds all the miracles of the Bible came to pass; truths fell from our lips with such force that the roof caved in, the table danced on four legs, and Elias streaked to heaven in a chariot of fire. The wasps' nest had been broken into and the devil was to pay.

But often I had seen it otherwise, too: all the heroes in the drama aiming for each other's hearts and simultaneously finding their mark. Afterwards the scene would be littered with dead as in some tragic farce. By this token may the older brother realize that he has uttered a truth: the knife-thrust he receives in his own heart. The affair is so wild and confused that no one observes the knife in little brother's hand until after he has struck.

No, never may I lay claim to having been a paragon of virtue. Mine was no case of persecuted innocence, far from it. I am to such a degree conscious of this that I may occasionally blacken myself slightly more than necessary. I was not innocent. But innocence is something which is taken from one, and who took mine from me? Gradually the whole thing developed into such a state of seething frenzy, a tragedy played through again and again, that at length, I, for my own part, fled from the whole business.

Yes, we have been extremely cruel to one another. But at home, where misfortunes occurred, the time is past for forgiveness and atonement and I do not suppose that they would do anyone any good. All that is a finished and closed saga, though some blood may still seep out from between the pages.

It is incredible that people have time for such things. Time? Time is the barbaric crucible wherein we are tested to see whether we are human beings or pack-horses. The many are but packhorses and it is their will that we shall all be beasts of burden: Maybe you think you are better than we?

No, thanks; I prefer the ant. It has character. The ant-god can be relied upon.

# THE BOY WHO LAUGHED

WHEN, during the early and naïve period of the motion picture, an itinerant company brought pictures to Jante, there were certain films which returned repeatedly; these presented in the leading role an unruly boy who was forever playing pranks on his elders. The latter always went astray in their efforts to catch him. At a safe distance he would sit and laugh at them. He was able to make even the grown-ups laugh.

This fact gave me much food for thought. Was it possible that there were persons who could laugh at a boy's insolence? Far out in the wide world, perhaps...

One look and the Jante boy was condemned. The slightest indication of levity and his knees would quake beneath those searching glances: What, did the fellow think he was something? Had he said something? No, positively not, he had said nothing, and he would creep off like a whipped dog, frightened to death lest someone should remember how he had made a fool of himself.

Within the family circle no manifestation of life was tolerated from below. I recall from earliest childhood Janus and Petrus in particular, the sour expressions on their faces and the look they would give to Mother if I in any way gave evidence of being

present. The young one was brushed aside with one curt merciless utterance: “Shut up, brat!” When Petrus, who was far older, came home with his sweetheart, we youngsters would sit silent and scared out of our wits in that house where an outsider craved supreme mastery and achieved it. Should the faintest sound escape us, and for even less than that, Aunt Oline’s hard eyes would fall upon us, and Mother would become alarmed. She would scold us after Aunt Oline had departed. With Oline there in the room, with all her sourness of disposition, jabbing at Mother because a letter had arrived home from Petrus that day, but none for Oline, we children would flee the house, later returning with frank anxiety: Was she still there? Then Mother would scold us again, for Oline had told her we were ill-bred.

Oline, together with Petrus, was the evil genius of those years. She was forever telling tales on us: we had ignored her on the street, we had failed to take off our caps to her, she would report. Often she told sheer lies. She came from a typical Jante home; she was mad for power and here was her chance.

Occasionally she told the truth. But this is the fact of the matter: I did not dare look in her direction, for I was afraid of her challenging eyes. I would blush as red as fire and be hardly able to stand on my legs whenever I was supposed to doff my cap to her. Much wickedness might perhaps have remained slumbering in the well and never emerged to lend so abominable a color to life had not that evil creature existed. Was she evil? I do not know and I hardly even believe that she was. What is evil, really? But she was a stiff and sour presence in our home. And Mother would either weep or scold us, or both, after she had gone. Oline did much to color my childhood gray. She took revenge upon one household for all she herself had suffered in another. And is not that the very essence of evil? Throughout my childhood I feared and detested Oline as I did no other. I see her face more distinctly before me now than that of any other person, including my mother’s. Oline was perpetually flushed with outraged feelings on one score or another. She had a blemish on her chin and she would toss her head and purse her lips tight together. Never did she utter a friendly word. It is impossible to imagine a person more foul as seen through the eyes of a child.

There always came a sense of relief when Petrus and Oline were absent, though the tyranny of my other brothers was sufficiently severe. Every new situation I encountered I would approach with uncertainty verging on mortal dread, and the ability of some people to behave naturally was for me an unattainable ideal. The first time I found myself in a large city, I crept stealthily along, hugging close to the buildings, through the darkest streets I could find, like a madman, and up until four years ago it was a physical impossibility for me to enter a restaurant unless there was a vacant table close by the door.

There exists an *augur-kultur* whose adherents will assert that the explanation of such behaviour is as clear as day: it is guilty conscience. But even this, we find, on closer scrutiny, does not simplify the question at all for the man who demands a definition of conscience. It is another matter, too, if conscience is really in any way involved, to seek its explanation, after one has changed the elements around as follows: I took a life because I had a guilty conscience.

Spare the rod and spoil the child, had been Aunt Dagny's doctrine. Obedience! the pedagogue demands. Neither will ever be aware that the gates of Fairyland stand wide open to the one who comes armed with a smile. Possibly it is wrong for a seven-year old child to say: "Shut your mouth!" to his father. But I should prefer to have this child, more or less in fun, tell me to shut my mouth in my hearing than to have him think ill of me and spit at me behind my back. When he clearly says: "Shut up!" at least the opportunity is offered to ask the child to moderate his expression a trifle. And when a child puts to me the question whether it is permissible to shoot his own father, that gives me the opportunity of leaving with him the thought that less violent remedies must be sought and, moreover, that it would be against the law — just as I have no right to shoot you, my boy! Now, never once dared I ask such a question. I ventured to ask no questions whatsoever. Instead I sat with tears in my eyes and thought how terrible it would be were I to kill my father by accident. More often my mind would fasten upon a brother.

As I watched that laughing boy up there on the white screen, I

would blush with shame at the thought of what the consequences would be were I to indulge in such conduct. I knew that I should be punished until the blood began spurting from under my nails. For such conduct would betray an aptitude for joy, and what the devil did I have to be joyful about? Did I in some way perhaps fancy myself something? Did I perhaps think I was some-thing? Is it perhaps at us you are laughing?

In this connection you may find something of an explanation of the phenomenal viability of the Katzen-jammer Kids in the comics. The knock-about character of this cartoon is psychologically accurate, with its never-ending portrayal of the motive of revenge. No living children would behave like these. But if they dared — there they are! Each week as they appear in the paper I study Hans and Fritz with the same unflagging interest as I did twenty years ago.

The motion picture always ended with a close-up of the boy contorted with laughter, holding his sides as he roared.

But then I would sit with bowed head, not daring to look up so long as this continued. And I was afraid that someone might see me as I sat thus. Therefore I would often shut my eyes tight, with only an occasional peep to see if he were still there.

The boy on the screen and the boy in the audience: it was the Jante child face to face with his own martyrdom.

The thirst for power is wasted on the one who can laugh. Laughter proves that he is more than thinly adequate, that he is provided with a reserve. Whenever Agnes or I forgot ourselves and laughed, Petrus would bring down his eyebrows and frown darkly. It was perfectly awful how disrespectful children were becoming these days! Oline would toss her head, purse her lips, would refuse to reply when Mother or Father addressed her, would flush, would toss her head. ...

# NEUTRALITY

I HAD been ill for several days. Oline was as querulous as usual; her acid gaze avoided my bed. What cold eyes she had! But she forced

herself to say that it was too bad I was ill, and wasted no more of her precious time on us. What was she to do in a circle in which she was not the center?

Then suddenly I realized I had a weapon in my hand. Whenever the world became too gray for me, I would simply pretend I was sick abed. Agnes, too, became delicate. Einer held out the longest, although he was older. But at length even he experimented with a day in bed and found out for himself how splendid it was.

Einer was always so kind to me when I was ill. When the season allowed, he would go out and steal an apple for me. This I would hide under the covers to eat when Mother was out of the room. Einer was a good brother; he would lie cheerfully whenever I was under suspicion. One day Mother caught me with all my pockets filled with apples. “Where did you get hold of these?” she demanded. I immediately began to cry. But then Einer came along, took in the situation at a glance, and said: “I saw him get them from Peter Olsen.” Somewhat embarrassed, Mother then asked me what I was yelling for if that were the case. “Oh —” Einer spoke up brilliantly — “Espen always wants to keep everything for himself. He’s so afraid he might have to share what he’s got with someone else!”

He carried it off beautifully, though he was but ten or eleven at the time. But there was no use trying to return favors. The older children refused to be bothered with me. “Go on! Off with you!” At all events, Einer was nearest my own age. Petrus would simply have said: “Espen stole the apples.”

Agnes and I were jostled from the trough like a pair of superfluous young porkers. When Petrus and Oline were in the house we were driven from the table and made to eat in the kitchen. If we ventured even so far as to whisper a protest — “There’s room enough!” — Oline would immediately pierce us with one of those vicious glances of hers and, with that, we disappeared.

I know what it was that caused the old people to yield their scepter of power, though they themselves never quite realized they were doing so. It was simply that they did not wish to “mix up in it,” which is the same thing as lending support to the strongest. They

desired to remain neutral, really believing that such a state exists. They were ignorant of the effect of neutrality. They strove for domestic peace and delivered the weak unto Moloch. They desired domestic peace, but behind this they cloaked the fact that they were actually afraid of Oline, as afraid as we ourselves were, and in the ranks of the fearful one may seek in vain for solidarity.

# THE MIGHTY JANTE

AFTER I myself had become a father, I made my children supernumeraries in my tragedy of Jante-terror. Not having made clear to myself at that time what, structurally, Jante really was, a grim dread forever haunted me of allowing them to grow up there, Not only that. They were to grow up in no one place, were never to be allowed to strike root. We were ceaselessly moving from place to place, settling eighteen times in eight years. Always a single urge impelled me: Move on travel, emigrate, take up a new language! Never most these children of mine be permitted to discover Jante, But Jante was everywhere; it loomed on the Canadian prairie, it stretched forth across the United States, it blossomed in Jevnaker as it flourished in Jutland. One could not hope to escape it through flight. Years passed before the truth of this dawned upon me.

No, this was no chance mood which lightly grazed my thoughts; it was eternally upon me — dread, flight. But apparently I have always been weak in reasoning power, indecisive, and often I would talk of the following in the light of experiment: In what way would the difference between my children and myself be expressed were their environment never to remain in any degree constant? I "moved" even beneath the same roof! — by changing the interior arrangement each week, by never allowing anything to remain in a definite place. In my boyhood home in Jante not a single piece of furniture or a picture had been moved from its accustomed place in all of forty years. I have stood over my children with a mind as changeable as the April sky, altered my forms of expression, refused ever to allow myself to crystallize into a set picture before them. In no sense were my children to grow up in a Jante — that evil presence which, like a dart cloud, had filled my entire sky.

Yes, I was weak in reasoning power at that time, my dread of Jante being colored by a very different form dread: my old hallucinatory dread of unmasking what had driven me to catastrophe in Misery Harbour.

So long as man is but a single entity, a party with hilt one member, he is more helpless than when he holds other fates in his hand. In the latter case he finds himself more in the background, sees himself more clearly.

# THE KNIFE THEY GAVE ME

THE PRESSURE from above was terrific; they were so numerous and large. But, at least, the situation in the past had never been so extreme as it became after Oline entered the family, when we were less than ever to be tolerated. Agnes, Einer, and I were not well enough dressed to suit her. Fearful, Mother would hide us from sight. Was it strange, then, that we should develop a loathing for Petrus, too, who stood at Oline's side with eyes as sullen as her own? But it was she who drove him to torture the old people with constant reference to their poverty — so long as they lived.

The psychologist took up the work of the zoologist, and today the two are as one. It is like a fragment of religion, two and yet one, and the one avenged the other. One was obliged to think, to mind what one was doing. That I learned. But ought I not, therefore, to kiss the hands of them that stoned me? No, for they did not act as they did toward me for the purpose of strengthening my character, and now, when I gaze at my class picture from school, I do so somewhat in a spirit of divine service: I glance into the faces of all those who fell by the wayside and think that so it must not be on earth! I myself regained my feet only because I had fallen farther than the rest. So far did I fall that memory has become a mightier weapon than forgetfulness and, journeying back into the past for the purpose of seeing what the whole thing had really been, I eventually found myself standing with my bloody knife in my hand before the Law of Jante. Laughter emerged from that old imperishable law-book, and a voice cried out: "Hey there, Espen! Maybe you don't think I know something about you!"

No, I have no thanks to offer. My intention is quite other than that. Often as I have sat here telling you this an ugly feeling has crept over me with a voice which mumbled: “Espen Arnakke, now you have hoisted the black flag!” It is the voice of the conscience they once fastened upon me home in Jante, an excerpt from Jante’s Talmud which sets forth all those things forbidden to man to mention. We insist that honesty is the best policy, but when one of our runaway thralls comes out and tells just what made him a thrall, we fling the Law of Jante in his face and shriek at him from the cross. It is not the truth anyone wishes to hear; there is only a desire to have the fellow back on the cross.

Psychology is the weapon of the thrall. In the hands of others it is but the coy gesture of senility. In mine it is sharp, for I have whetted it on a brother’s thigh.

# HE EARLY KNEW THE LAW OF JANTE

You said you did not understand how I could turn aside from zoology since this was my compelling joy and especially since no one had raised a direct objection. No, and I hardly believe you will ever come to an understanding of it, either. You are not from Jante. But I have told you all this, nevertheless, in the hope that in the end you will achieve at least a partial comprehension. And more will follow later on in another connection. My incertitude, you must surely see, was that of a whipped dog. Yes, and now you shall hear of a little experience which illustrates perfectly both the incertitude and all that the thrall was aware of in the throes of his incertitude.

I was eleven or twelve when Petrus Arnakke became a petty superintendent of public works. It was only a minor post, but there was much envy there in that small town where many had been out after the job and where each begrudged all others their meanest triumphs. When a lamplighter died, Jante’s first concern was who should have this job, competitive envy being expressed in a general gnashing of teeth.

The position given to Petrus was nothing to boast of, but it came to him at precisely the opportune moment, for Jante was in the midst of a period of initiative immediately preceding the war, which also, in turn, moved Petrus up a peg. But, in the beginning, no one was even faintly aware of these possibilities. It was only that it was a soft job, coveted for its own sake. Operations were in charge of two men: Petrus and a stationary engineer.

One day I was given a message to deliver to Petrus. I looked for him but could not find him anywhere about. I should have to ask the engineer where he was. But at that very moment fear gripped me. What was I going to say?

The engineer, it seemed, was not averse to believing that he himself might have been made superintendent just as well as Petrus. As he had not been, he was given the title of Assistant. But Petrus begrudged him this. The irony of the situation did not occur to either of them and their scornful feelings toward each other spread to include their respective families. Therefore, at my approach, the engineer set his jaws in an expression of hard disdain... How, then, should I frame my question?

The frightened little person stands before the frightened big person. I sense him to be as small as I am. But I neither know it nor am proud of it; it has only made me even more afraid.

If I should ask if he knows where Petrus is, he will look superciliously at me and ask who Petrus may be. Perhaps Petrus will learn the manner in which I asked after him. Then he will be angry because I mentioned him by his Christian name rather than by his surname. And what will Oline say?

If I ask the engineer where my brother is, his eyes will tell me that I probably think I am something, just because I have such a brother. He will say that he doesn't know what people are my brothers. Certainly he doesn't know me. And if Petrus and Oline hear of that, they, too, will believe me to be under the impression I am something, and that I go about hither and yon telling everyone I meet that Petrus is my brother, and that, thinks Petrus, is something which had better not be known. Ask after the superintendent? The engineer will knife me with a look, will tell people how self-

important we are. “I don’t know where your brother is!” he will say.

Ask after Superintendent Arnakke, then? No, that would be worse.

Simply ask after Arnakke?

I dared wait with my question no longer. Tiny and meek, I approached the man and asked where Arnakke was — no, naturally, I did not ask in exactly those words, oh dear no! That would have been an insult — I asked if it wasn’t possible that he might have seen Arnakke recently.

He looked me up and down, uttered a curt reply, and turned on his heel. No, he had not.

I had known in advance what his answer would be. But, at least, I should not have to tell Father that I had asked no one after Petrus. Sick at heart, but vastly relieved, I left the place. The following day proved that my dread had been justified: I was sneered at in school because I had allowed myself to believe I was something, because I had asked after Herr Arnakke, when all I had wanted was to speak to that brother of mine!

The hopelessness involved in getting out a simple little question and my knowledge in advance of its effects throw some light on my happy childhood! So now perhaps you, too, will appreciate how easy it was to destroy the zoologist. The Jante boy is ready to flee as though the Devil were after him, at the first sniff of gunpowder, and it was a murderous shot which suddenly rang out that time when everyone laughed at the youth who, *even after confirmation*, raced around outside of Jante one day hunting for insects. After that ceremonious initiation into manhood’s estate, such conduct was nothing less than scandalous and a direct affront particularly to all those who wished to appear *grown-up* from that hour on.

Once there was a man who was threatened with dismissal from his job in an office simply because he played foot-ball in the evening. And Father said he could easily understand why. The man ought not to have acted like a little boy! And there you have it in a nutshell, even though sport as sport has since conquered even Jante.

People laughed, and some uttered caustic comments, and, with that, the zoologist, mad with fright, took to cover, like a somnambulist who suddenly awakes in the middle of the street, clad only in his nightshirt — ashamed before the entire world.

This dream of standing half-naked and ridiculed is a reflection of those times when we betrayed ourselves and came out the loser. If it is repeated at a time when we no longer feel we have anything more to lose, we have found our Misery Harbour. You may say that, even though it is now obvious to myself that all threads lead thence, there is still much need for explanation, for thus far not I alone but many other Jante boys would similarly be forced to become murderers. Ah yes, my friend, and perhaps they have been, too, though not in so absolute a sense. For We carry in our souls a mighty barricade against murder, and Jante is able to goad us forward to that point where we have the strength to strike only when we find ourselves suddenly confronted by the sum total of our defeats compressed into a single target. When tragedy decides that the Jante boy, on the day he finds himself with sufficient strength and with a dagger in his belt, shall stand face to face with something which gathers into itself all the rays of his childhood as a spectrum, he will not pause to think or decide. He has then found his Misery Harbour.

# CONFESSIONAL

OFTEN have I thought of giving a monologue, of betaking myself to a deserted mountain farm in some parish where all the inhabitants have emigrated to America — there I would sit alone in the abandoned but and scream at the barren walls. But I have never ventured to do this, I have never been able to muster sufficient courage to execute my plan of finding myself alone in such surroundings, for I should inevitably have imagined crooked beings stealing from the woods to eavesdrop outside the house. And I should have gained no relief under such conditions; I should never have been able to keep on with the thread of my story; I should have clung fast to a single knot and sat there screaming. I should soon have given way to a mad invocation of myself, precisely as I had the time I lay in the sea off Dead-man’s Point and informed the

codfish that I was Espen Arnakke of Jante, or the time I gave the same information to a square kilometer of forest in Newfoundland.

# THE WARDEN

THE WARDEN appeared to me the very personification of evil. He denied me the right to be in Paradise. What was I doing in the woods when I was allowed only on the roads? Others laughed at him, but I was unable to do so. Well, yes, after I was thirteen or fourteen I ventured to laugh with the rest, though I secretly feared the consequences. He was very large when I was very small and he had a way of forever appearing in the woods when he had no occasion to be there. Today I smoke too much, but once I used to be something of a sprinter. And I could thank the warden for that!

As I grew older, it was considered glorious sport of an evening to climb the fence into the warden's yard and watch him going to bed. He felt secure in the thought that the gate to his premises was bolted on the inside and he never bothered to draw a single window-shade. First his wife would creep into the big double bed, then the servant girl, and, last of all, the warden himself. His wife was an awe-inspiring sight, for her many gray and white layers of skin were always scaling off like gypsum. She was many years older than he, and it was said that he had received five hundred crowns as his price for marrying her. She was a hermaphrodite and so old that one was confident she had not long to live. But life is an ironical institution. After many years of marriage in all honor and chastity, the man died first. He was a bloated little fellow with a full beard. The servant girl was somewhat dull of wit. After all three had crawled into bed, the warden would read the evening prayer in a loud voice before he put out the light, and, with that, we would all disappear the way we had come.

That the pious warden and the servant girl were lovers we never for a moment doubted. But since then I have made the discovery that life may occasionally be rather more involved than that. Possibly it was true he did have something to do with the girl, but it is no less reasonable to suppose that she was but one of the angles of a triangle. We all play along in one way or another, even though We

be fossilized hermaphrodites.

On Sundays, on their way to prayer meeting, the fossil would always march in the lead, the warden directly astern, and the servant girl full to the rear. The wife, gray-white and rugged, her stiff rectangular frame draped with huge masses of clothing, and her hymn-book done up in a handkerchief, seemed to hook her way along. The warden, his face frozen into an imbecile sneer, saw nothing but the ground before him. A few paces behind him walked the girl, grinning oafishly, her hair the color of red lead, her eyes pale, her lips like those of a nun, her hymn-book clutched in her red hands.

But the warden was the lord of the woods.

# SKYLDFRI SIDENIUS

I HAVE known people who lacked ability to plan a campaign in their struggle for existence. I have reason to suppose that these are not few in number. They cannot constrict their front-line operations; they are not strategists. The worst case I ever knew was that of a woman. She never discovered the virtue of a rapierthrust through Belgium. Her tactics were to push forward at full steam her entire front, extending from Antwerp to the Vosges.

Just such a battle-front as this is decidedly useful and expedient in Jante, where no one is gifted with Vial of a feeling for nuance. The woman I mentioned above weighed half a ton and bore the name of Skyldfri Sidenius. She had actually been christened Skyldfri [3] — this was no mere nickname which Jante had fastened upon her. Were one to inquire of Madame Skyldfri just what she had really meant by spreading gossip about one the way she had, one would gain little satisfaction in the way of an answer to *that*. On the contrary, she would blurt out, with admirable vitality, at least thirty additional and even worse recriminations, after which she would thunder through Jante spreading still an additional seventy, each more vicious than the last. She would call no halt until the victim had sought her out and apologized to her for having hurt her feelings. Then she would weep a little and assume an air of

magnanimity — “For even if you are full of mistakes, Espen, and have never behaved very nicely to me, I like you all the same, just because you are Oskar’s cousin!”

Ugh! To be a cousin of Oskar’s was another of the minor curses life may visit upon a person.

Skyldfri Sidenius was very much like the Bible. If one breaks through the front in the Second Book of Moses, one is shelled from the Revelation of St. John, and if one attacks at that point, one is immediately cut off by the Psalms of David reinforced by Paul’s Epistles to the Corinthians, the Acts of the Apostles, and Genesis in further support. If one keeps on, one falls and breaks an arm in the Fifth Book of Moses, under renewed fire from Revelation and ugly sounds from Balaam’s ass. Skyldfri Sidenius was extremely religious.

I mention Skyldfri Sidenius as an example of a certain psychic type. Her case is likewise an excellent illustration of warfare as it is waged in Jante. It is possible to divide the population into the Terrorists and the Terrorized, though this may be splitting hairs a little too fine, for, as a matter of fact, terror was one emotion we all experienced in common with the rest...

The antithesis of Skyldfri — the type with possibilities — did not possess, like her, a short-circuit between all psychic centers. Father was of this type, as were all his children. And perhaps it is simply a question of mental capacity. We all had our talents, each in his own particular field.

The experiences I am about to relate could never have been sustained by the Skyldfri type, for they may be considered best as the radiations from an esoteric and well-fortified center which have split my identity and will forever handicap me in the wretched battle of clubs along the broad Skyldfri front.

[3] *Skyldfri*, Innocent.

# THE HOLYSTONE

I SHALL tell of the holy stone. And of a little lamb. And much more

which moves me more deeply than what I have told you about my father and about Fairyland. This evening you must pardon me if my voice is not always steady. I shall reveal a center of my being which I forced open less than a month ago. And, as a result, I relived a tragedy of my childhood. But if you ask me what the tragedy consisted of, I shall be at a loss for a reply. Even now.

Tonight I shall be no chronicler of dry experiences. For this is something which has been re-experienced by the child himself. For a few moments I was a child again, and then it came to pass. There are certain elements of it which partake of the quality of a dream. But it is no dream. It consists of recollections in picture-language of the time when I was on the road to developing a human identity and when my thought forms were entirely visual. I believe that the divers religions all take their origin from such momentary leaps back into the past — back into Fairyland and Paradise when life was still, for the most part, hallucination and the individual had as yet learned but little in the way of language, of the words they later stole from the ground beneath the Tree of Knowledge.

There came a day in my but out in Fagerstrand when I suddenly remembered that I had once been in love with a stone. You probably know something about this sort of thing: how, when one is very young, one may endow some inanimate object with special significance — a stone, a tree, a crack in the wall. I had a number of such things which were objects of something akin to prayer. In the yard a little black stone protruded from the ground and this I took to be the Devil's horn. But the stone of which I am now thinking was part of a granite wall surrounding Adamsen's farm. I see it before me now as it was when I used to caress it daily for many years. It was smooth and yellowish of tint, cleft in the middle by a double striation which separated it into two faintly perceptible bulges. Lengthwise, from right to left, the stone measured a little under a foot. Its breadth was somewhat less. It would seem that I am still in love with that stone.

When the sun shone down upon the wall and my stone became warm I could not resist the urge to stroke it and pat it with my hand. At play on the sidewalk, I would jealously maintain my ownership of that particular stone, and though the other children

would choose other stones for themselves, they would always forget which they were and would designate different ones the next time they played. There were also two other stones which I disliked anyone else to touch. But these were of minor significance.

My on great love lay in the wall a good yard above the ground. I recall it with deepest emotion as I viewed it at the time when 1 had to stretch to reach it.

When the weather was cold, I merely stood looking at the stone. I made no move to approach it when it was cold.

Later, when I returned to Jante as an adult, I strolled past to look once again at the stone. But immediately my legs faltered beneath me and I was chilled by the feeling that I stood on John Wakefield's grave.

I have never trodden that sidewalk since.

There are moments when I seriously believe that never in the world have I loved, or will ever love, anything as passionately as that stone in Adamsen's wall. I have fancied myself weeping on my knees before it in the night.

There it rests in its wall, and to me it is the gateway to Fairyland. I have been bound to it as though by an umbilical cord.

It was the holy stone and to it the faithful would have had to make their pilgrimage were I to have become a Mohammed.

At this point, like a child, I feel somehow forlorn. A darkness envelops me and from deep within comes the sound of a child's weeping.

The experience I mentioned earlier occurred in my but at Fagerstrand one day as I stood thinking of the holy stone after having made an attempt to sketch it. The sketch lay on the table and I was standing a short distance away from it. Then there was something I thought ought to bring me great joy. I cannot express it more clearly. There seemed to be a mysterious something which was, endeavoring to fill me with joy. I could see my sketch the

stone and imagined it might have something to do with it. Suddenly something took place within my head, like the click of a camera; I was on the point of grasping something, but it eluded me. A face? A figure? Then I saw an hour-glass, but realized that it was not meant to be an hour-glass. Yes? No, I had been deceived... I stood there on edge with expectancy, for the whole time something kept on happening within my brain...

I am now on the subject of a phenomenon into the consciousness of which I have often attempted to initiate others. However, once I have been successful in explaining it to them, all have consistently denied ever having had similar experiences: Something happens within my brain which is utterly beyond my control. Only a few times in my life have I experienced this effect. Once, inside my head a male chorus sang out the hymn *Udrundne er de Gamle Dage*. It was not a figment of the imagination, or anything to do with myself. It was, to me, in all ways irrelevant. I was in no manner a participant, for I was unable to cause it to cease. I had not invoked it, had had nothing at all to do with it. It simply occurred within my head. A deep and resonant chorus suddenly began singing and sang the hymn through to the end. It is one of the most beautiful hymns I have ever heard. I myself know only the first stanza by heart and recall nothing of those which follow. But all the stanzas were sung for me. I was wild with astonishment as I stood there listening.

It was something of this very nature that happened to me out there at Fagerstrand, but there my experience was visual. Certain scenes were fragmentary and incomprehensible, others were chains of recollection like part of a moving scroll. No, I am utterly at a loss to explain it, for it bore not the slightest similarity to ordinary remembrance. It was as though, entirely within my head, a mystery were being unfolded, while I myself simply stood by, a casual spectator. It was as much an objective experience as those I had had in the past, standing motionless and watching a mole at work in the earth. I had absolutely nothing to do with it.

People speak of waking dreams, but when I have described my own waking dreams in these terms, no one else seems to have experienced anything like them.

It is no hallucination in the current understanding of the term.

What happens takes place within one's head. I have discussed the subject with people of intelligence, but they either failed to understand me or declined to believe me. With those of slight mentality it is impossible to discuss the matter at all. Either they will be unable to explain what they have comprehended or they will render a snap judgment before it is possible for them to have understood anything at all.

The dream, the abbreviated image, is, I believe, the ape's thought-form. The thinking horse naturally thinks in neither English, Norwegian, nor Abyssinian, but must take refuge in some thought-form other than that which seeks expression in words. We must always have had dreams, even before the acquisition of our present form of consciousness and it is probable that we dream without a second's interruption from the fifth month in our mother's womb until the moment we die. The source of all conscious thought is somehow involved in the sense of sight.

I do not know that I am a unique specimen, having preserved both the ape's and the human being's forms of consciousness to an almost equal degree. I hardly believe I am. I am led rather to infer that no wholly exceptional persons exist, though far from all of us were stamped with the same design in the original plan.

In the majority of my day-dreams I am able, like every-one else, to regulate the course of events, but in some I am absolutely powerless to do so. There flows through my brain at such times an uncontrollable stream of consciousness — quite as though I were peering into the brain of another person.

But now you shall hear: Never before have I been able to see the slightest connection between controllable and hallucinatory thought. Out at Fagerstrand something remarkable took place.

I had been absorbed in contemplation of the holy stone, but had given up the problem as unfathomable. Then I suddenly found myself standing there external to myself, as it were, and able to observe how my hallucinatory consciousness continued to labour with the problem — the problem I myself had abandoned.

After a little this secondary consciousness, the operation of which I

had continued to observe as an outsider, began casting results right before my eyes with a scoffing: Now then, poor chap, here you are!

You have probably had one experience common to us all: that of pondering over a problem a long while with-out arriving at the solution and later, perhaps after the passage of several days or more, suddenly achieving the desired result without once having thought of the problem during the interim. It is this deeper mental process which is not always hidden from my view. I observe it in progress as though it were under glass. You will agree that it is a far cry from the usual waking dream to this sort of thing.

But was there, at least, a certain degree of cooperation between these two forms of consciousness? I do not believe it. It was a completely different entity that bestirred itself and spoke ironically: Poor fugitive, see here!

At that point I no longer sensed that mysterious urge to joy. I recoiled from this other man who was still no less myself, this external me that acted quite independently and uttered sarcastic remarks. Of course, it appeared as a service, this activity for which he was responsible, but behind it all there seemed to lurk a kind of malevolence. He had presented me with a gift, but with a scornful smirk.

It was another soul. Yes, I repeat, another soul. I saw a graywhite surface, like a tendinous tissue, with something alive beneath it — there was movement like that of a hand under a sheet. Then this something broke through long, white fingers, the living hand of a corpse. It was juggling with something which stood straight up and swayed as it rose from that gray-white tissue into a dark void, from a sort of diaphragm into a dark and empty thorax. I stared at it closely. It was something oblong, ellipsoidal; a pear? No, it was an hour-glass... or was it a pair of twin fruits, two plums, say? Then suddenly it might have been two coins — there were distinctly two — these drew near one another and again it was an hour-glass...

Finally it settled into a state of repose and was the holy stone. And the holy stone began opening along the seam across its face, throwing open its gates to give me vision into a shining land, the Garden of Paradise out of which I had been driven long years

before. I staggered and had to sit down, suddenly more unstrung than I had ever been since the moment I stood over John Wakefield's corpse in Misery Harbour. And there from within the holy stone shone the gentle face of my father, his eyes bright and clear. He gazed at me and softly spoke my name. And then I tried to invoke myself again, but the words froze in my mouth and I said: "Yes, Father, here I am."

And again I was aware of my tragedy down to its very depths, all these black years of despair. I realized why the fugitive had never crossed his tracks and why I had been chased by evil spirits through the deepest caverns of hell for something which others are able to live down.

Father disappeared and now I stood looking up several streets toward an open square. It was market day in Jante, and the sun was shining brightly. I went to call on Father in his workshop and asked him if he would give me some money with which to buy a little lamb. Father glanced down on me and smiled, probably thinking that I, being little, ought to go home. Soon it would be evening. He said: "You'll have to go home and ask Mother, for she has all my money."

I went home and told Mother that Father had said I might have some money so that I could go to the market-place and buy a little lamb. Mother stood over me, tall and smiling, she, too. "Well, well," she said, "so you want to buy a little lamb?"

And, with that, she became generous, gave me more than she really could afford at the moment. She gave me two two-örepieces and said: "Go, then, and buy you a lamb."

And Father saw me return to him with money in my hand; he looked at me for a little and said: "It was a good thing Mother had money, but it's evening now, so go and buy yourself some candy soon it will be market day again."

I was delighted with that and walked home with Father, my hand in his. Father had a hard, strong hand, but a hand which was gentle as could be. I remember that he stroked my hair...

There came from the light in the holy stone certain rustling sounds, but I saw nothing in it now save light. Then that round object appeared again and I saw that it was coins; first two twoöre-pieces, then two one-ore, then two two-öre again. They took on definite form there in the light within the holy stone. And beneath them appeared the dead face of my mother...

Another time was being represented in the stone now and the light was much dimmer than before. The stone moved its doors a little as though it were thinking of closing them. It was three or possibly four years farther along in time now and the scene was our kitchen at home. I was sitting on the cement floor in the act of cleaning my wooden shoes. Then Mother said: “Where are the four öre I had up here on the plate-shelf?”

I turned to her. She and I were alone in the kitchen. “I didn’t take them,” I said.

A thought occurs to me now: Should I not have run off somewhere if I had taken the money?

Mother gave me a sharp look and I paled when the seriousness of the situation dawned upon me: I had been the only one there in the kitchen!

The explanation is beyond me. But I had not taken the money. Never in my life have I stolen money.

Mother became furious. “You not only steal, but lie!” she said. I never got over that.

There was a flash and the scene changed inside the holy stone; the light was even dimmer than before, and at length it was entirely dark. The doors stood open. Then something white came gliding across the scene. It was my mother’s coffin.

There was another shift. I stood in a garden and a little child was clinging to one leg of my trousers. The little boy was singing a little song: “Di-da-da-di-ha.” It was my son. I lit my pipe and the boy blew out the match. A man appeared with braid about his visored cap and handed me a telegram:

Mother is nearing the end

-Petrus

And now it was night on the train; I was grieving, for I had not stolen those four öre of hers; of course I had not. Was it possible to convince her now? No, no! It was no longer possible...

When I arrived home it was the day before the funeral.

The vision collapsed and a new scene took shape; time had taken a backward leap and there before my eyes welt the coins and my mother's face again. Her face faded out but the coins remained: two two-öre and four one-öre-pieces. Underneath the coins a line was drawn as though by means of a ruler, and then there suddenly sprang into view the figure 8.

$4 + 4 = 8$

But immediately the figure 8 had appeared, it grew to be very large as it hung there by itself in that dark space. And the 8 gave forth a metallic sound as though it were fastened by a chain and it played a melody, a mournful melody. Then it began to vibrate in the middle, divided itself like a cell, and became two spheres, which found each other again. But now it was apparent that they were two spheres which had grown together, like an abbreviated dumbbell. It began swinging and again there was that metallic sound.

The image vanished and I found myself lying in a little crib, unable to fall asleep. It was dark in the room, in which there were many beds. Someone was snoring horribly and the sound of it made me afraid. Moreover, I detested sleeping with Einar in such a tiny bed. Agnes was not nearly so tall and broad as Einar, so why should she always have a bed to herself? There was always such a fuss made over Agnes. Einar ought to sleep alone, he who was so big, and Agnes and I together could share one bed. But there was something so special about Agnes — my little lamb, as Mother always called her. As for me, I was no one's lamb. Could not Mother have called me, too, by some such name? Probably I was not as good as Agnes. The only thing Mother ever called me was Pedersen, and at that she would laugh. She should not be allowed to call me a name which

made her laugh. No, indeed. I wouldn't stand for it. But Agnes — with her it was always and forever "my lamb, my precious little lamb." And all the rest, they were big.

Again I stood in the market square, this time looking at the merry-go-round as it whirled about with many a farm. boy astride its prancing steeds. In the centre a hurdy. gurdy was playing. On his way round, a sailor asked a girt if she liked horse-radish. She tossed her head in the manner of Aunt Oline, and the sailor grinned.

I gazed long at "the pear" and the man who was swinging it. The pear was the two spheres joined together. It was hanging on a chain from a sort of gallows by the side of the merry-go-round and a man was making it swing. It could be snatched from the chain. It was made of wood and was encircled by a metal band. Each time a boy came bounding past on his handsome steed, he would straighten up in the saddle and reach for the pear. The one who succeeded in plucking the pear was entitled to one free ride.

And then I was standing beside Mother's coffin. It was so poor and small. Something went to pieces inside me. No, I had not taken the money, I had not taken it, really. And then I burst into a violent spasm of sobs. I clutched the coffin and sobbed. It was the first time I had wept since I was a boy. Things do not move me to tears. I did not weep when Father was being lowered into the ground.

Petrus and I were alone in the chapel. When I turned to him, he stood there with bowed head. He did not look up, said nothing. I realized then that we might meet again, but never as brothers. Ah no, nor as human beings, either.

I looked at the man who was old enough to have been my father. The first and last links in a long, unbreakable chain of children were for a single time alone in the proper sense of the word. But we both comprehended too little. I looked at him, that industrious unimaginative toiler who could hardly be said to have had too much happiness on earth and who had lived long enough for his life to have become, like Father's, a reaction against Grandfather, against the blood of an artist, as we so naïvely put it, with which I for one, at least, had not come in sufficiently close contact to deter me.

He turned and sighed as he left the chapel. I had had a question on the tip of my tongue: You who have lived so much longer than I, could you tell me who Mother was when she was young?

But then the doors of my holy stone which rests in the granite wall about Adamsen's farm in Jante swung shut. I packed my bag and left Fagerstrand.

It seems to me I have been sitting here outlining for you a book of revelation. How much or how little you have understood of it I shall never know. So brief and fused together are the elements of the hallucinist's life-record. He does not sit shaping a formalism. He burns.

There was another stone in my childhood, but it was only imaginary. It was a huge stone which was to stand at my grave, and it was to be too enormous ever to be moved. I did not stop to think that it would thus be equally impossible to have it placed on my grave. It was to stand there and protect me, be my eternal life. You will never be allowed to forget him!

For the hideous part about death was that the dead were held eternally beyond the pale and were soon forgotten. Old gravestones lay in a pile in one corner of the churchyard, and the graves themselves were gone. The thought froze me that so it would be with me some day. Ah — the pyramids! There were tombs indeed!

Four öre were my mother's goodness, and four öre her hasty judgment. Four plus four — there you have her, the hour-glass, the pear, the figure 8. And the farmer boys were reaching after the figure 8, but I was too small and wanted money for a lamb, Agnes, my little lamb.

It was for this reason that such a hideous mistake had been made in accusing me of the theft of four öre, the very sum I needed for the purchase of the lamb I desired, The stolen shilling which, later on, is proved never to have been stolen at all is a favorite theme of worthy authors, and readers are rendered happy by it and consider that the writer is a magnificent person simply because he has lulled them to sleep, performed a little act of magic, with the result that they believe the story really concerns itself with the shilling, as he

himself, too, believes. I am no longer a slave to honesty, God be praised, for under such conditions it is an easy matter to keep from stealing.

What might have happened were I, only a few years ago, to have detected someone committing an act of vandalism against that stone in Adamsen's wall?

I should have assaulted the man. I am as certain of this as though some such affair had actually occurred. I am positive I should have acted without pausing to think until after it was too late. Espen Arnakke arrested for violence Assaulted, without provocation, a workman he did not even know. Is he mad?

I should have been held for observation. I doubt that anyone would have been able to get a word out of me concerning the affair, but had I dared to go so far as to confess what my true feelings for the holy stone were, surely the situation would have been in no way improved.

Well, the fact is I am not enough of an idiot ever to have become so deeply involved. Quite easily I could have cleared myself of observation wards, doctors, and holy stones: "My eyes simply deceived me. It was another person to whom I owed a thrashing." And the punishment for such an offense would not have cost me my life.

I was speaking of the grave under the holy stone. Do you perceive whence this has led us?

How many do you suppose go about with so combustible a complex encysted within their brains? Many, Perhaps everyone. More than likely, too, the very doctor who, with the pompous air of an expert, would have gone probing into my cranium.

But now I shall allow the holy stone to sink, not into forgetfulness, but back into the nether world as an entirely commonplace stone.

# HAPPY CHILDHOOD

IT is a common superstition that children are happy, that they do not work and that they dwell in Paradise. Past conditions, after many years have elapsed, often take on in retrospect a decidedly heavenly aspect. It would be an act of mercy to destroy this celestial illusion, for it is a gayly painted screen which hides from the sight of the adult not only the felonies committed against him as a child but also the felonies he himself, perhaps unwittingly, commits against other children. While children suffer, we go on babbling idiotically on the subject of happy childhood.

The child is not well off. He is very badly off. His lot is improved only where his elders lend him a guiding hand. Ordinarily when the adult interferes, he does so as an idiot and almost never out of any real regard for the child. Then the child's condition goes immediately from bad to worse.

The child's happiness depends upon his unceasing effort to leap clear of the fundamental pain of his existence. And childhood is the period of most strenuous toil. I have seen it. I have been through it myself. I strongly doubt that any adult on earth has ever undertaken and actually accomplished the impossible things he did in his childhood. No deed of human heroism I have yet encountered in newspapers or books of history can compare with something I shall now report to you which was accomplished by no few boys from eight to ten home in Jante.

I may say in advance that this leads in a direct line to Misery Harbour. This particular victory scored by a ten-year-old boy appeared to me as a clear defeat later on when I saw John Wakefield fall. For then I could stand it no longer. I had been struggling for an eternity, it seemed to me, but always each defeat would appear to me greater than the last. And then the network of defeat became too complicated. There was no longer any way forward. He was the mighty incarnation of all my defeats suffered during childhood and youth. Afterwards he himself set the situation to rights...

It was a clear case of suicide.

That is probably saying a good deal. But the man who gets himself caught in a bear-trap, more often than not, might have avoided it.

John Wakefield might have avoided his plight. I still craved his friendship, continued craving it up until ten seconds before I threw myself upon him, perhaps even up until the very last second — yes, for otherwise it would never have happened. And after-wards it was a long time before I became any the wiser. In the years which followed I pained many persons with my friendship. The distressing element in the whole affair was that he desired it precisely thus and rejoiced over it I wonder if he liked me. Had he been in his own peculiar way fond of me as I am certain that Aunt Oline was? But complex individuals must not come to grips too closelY. This they are bound to do, but the result is most frequently a short-circuit and a subsequent blaze. The disharmonious individual is unable to make a clean separation between love and hate. He can go so far as to fall about the neck of his enemy and shoot the one he loves best. It is upon such phenomena that one may erect ain interesting literature, with the reader nodding approval. That is the easiest course. But silver nitrate is more wholesome. For, in reality, these are but rot and filth and lice on the soul.

As a rule, it is the disharmonious person to whom we attribute great talent, meanwhile bemoaning the vast and excellent possibilities he has squandered. The situation is entirely misunderstood, for his talents are, of course, the direct products of the disharmony which, from the earliest years of his life, has directed and trained his mind. Doubtless there exists such a thing as talent free from disharmony, but this is talent of a different order. The person who has been persecuted in childhood has later goaded his brain to the very point of open warfare against disharmony.

What are the disharmonies a child encounters? Yes, this may well be the inquiry of the man who has canceled out his own childhood! For the child everything is disharmony, even his own growth. The level at which one finds oneself today is not the same level three months later, and even this in turn is not final. The child is, as it were, in transit, moving forward in a manner which we, for divers reasons, do not care to recall. The child feels himself scorned by those who came into the world before him and kicks at those who are younger than he. You would like to know to what a vast degree the question of age absorbs the mind of a child; he broods over it constantly and keeps himself carefully informed as to his own and

the exact ages of all his fellows. Acquaintanceships inevitably begin with: “What’s your name? How old are you?” These are the keys to his knowledge. No sooner does an adult speak with a child than he scurries back to his earlier plane of existence: “What’s your name? How old are you?”

One’s name is fundamental; it is written everywhere, is carved into the bark of trees, into wooden fences, into every wooden surface. But it is age one is breathless to know, that is the aim of life itself. Between the questions of name and growth lies the child’s vast incertitude this one whose name is Peter, but who will not continue to be what he is. Long did I once ponder the problem of holy river could have a name — Is it still called the Amazon far out at sea, in the ocean with whose waters it has mingled its own? At its source it is very narrow and quite unlike the river it grows to be farther along — is it so certainly then the Amazon? Its waters today are not the waters that flowed there yesterday, but always they label it the Amazon.

And it was, of course, I who was correct; it is the child who is correct. Life is not in the least endowed with significance by mere virtue of a name, including life’s three churchly sacraments. But that is what the formalists believe. Actually, when the pressure from above and below becomes so great that the individual is enabled to think for himself, at this point the international Jante’s attempt to stabilize the human being on the basis of name and age breaks down. There are families that hold annual reunions and worship a name, though, as a matter of fact, we know little of family heredity. It is obvious that we ought to have no family name, only a given name, or a number like an automobile, and to rid ourselves of all formal titles invented simply to put people in their proper place in relationship to each other.

# NOT LESS THAN YE

WHEN mention is made of what most people regard as the child’s gravest sin, that which derives its name from the Jew Onan, it is most often with vast gravity of tone, eyes rolled heavenward, and a deal of unctuous preaching on the subject of perversion — *Woe*

betide him who yields to perversion!" and more of a piece with that.

To such a degree have the sexual functions been befouled by a moral attitude, the crudest in the history of the world, that their very terminology has been worn down to the level of obscenity even by those who know better. Obviously a word can be neither proper nor improper.

Only today I found in a book, the work of an optimist, the statement that there is much evidence of moral progress, one example chosen from many being the fact that in the works of Ludvig Holberg may be discovered no end of indecent terms, whole sentences even, which in our own day are, quite fortunately, no longer employed. When the thing is expressed so naïvely and crudely, one laughs. But forgets that this is, in reality, the viewpoint of the person of culture which suddenly stands naked and ludicrous, for the very reason that it is advanced with such firm conviction.

But to certain words is attached a part, if not all, of the child's sense of dread, whereupon they take on a sound we term un-aesthetic. Such words no longer exist in my mind. I realize their effect and therefore I discard them, not because of the words themselves, but because I would deprive them of a meaningless power and effect which I myself should be unable to control. There are those who urge that they be employed none the less. I believe, however, that such people seek mainly to appear shocking and are therefore exactly as warped and ill of mind as their listeners. One must have no consideration! Very well, not even when one desires to be understood? There seems to me little point in gaining the plaudits of a handful of initiates who stand in no need of enlightenment anyway, only to be senselessly howled down by the vast majority, the very ones to whom the appeal is addressed. Wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove, has it been written.

At no point in the Scripture where the name of Onan is mentioned is he accused of committing the act which derives its name from him. Let us call it "celibacy."

Those heaven-rolled eyes and all this talk about per, version in relation to "celibacy" are but the remnants of the pose of a vanished

generation still naïvely maintained, in spite of the fact that no grown man can conscientiously declare himself guiltless. We cling to the doctrine of perversion as to a last frontier and will continue to repeat the gibberish that the human being does not discover the sex life until after others have explained to him what it is. Some do, of course, receive enlightenment from others, but this proves absolutely nothing, inasmuch as these same individuals would, in any event, have made the discovery quite independently at the very point of time they become receptive to explanation...

It was with a pitiful sense of shame that I found myself at one time unable to do what others could do. In the course of many subsequent years I allowed myself to forget this, allowed it to sink back into the darkness out of regard for the current though incomprehensible argument that such things belonged to another time and therefore no longer concerned me. But times changed and at length it became a stern necessity for me to remember the very things one normally prefers to forget. And I dragged it forth again. I held it aloft in the light, year after year, because it was so necessary for me to remember. The depth of my shame at the time would be beyond the power of an adult to comprehend. A faint realization of it could be gained only were it possible to open that eight- to ten-year-old Jante boy's head and read the writing in the convolutions of his brain. Growth which never brings one whither one desires, but which is perpetually a series of effects which arrive too late, the fury, the desperation oh heavens! The man who has been through this himself and knows what I mean would no longer fear either death or destruction, I am sure, could he be convinced that the liberation of childhood hung in the balance!

The subject I intend to discuss at this point is less "celibacy" itself than its prelude. For there was a prelude, a year-long period when the result was only half. But we struggled to have it complete, with a ruthlessness which brooked no interference. Every single day for two years, from my eighth until my tenth year, on the way home from school, I would dash off by myself. Far from town, sometimes miles, I would go, until I had found a place where absolutely no one could see or hear me, and there I would lie down. After a half or a full hour of violence came the spasm which for a few seconds would be fully ecstatic, but which never failed to fill me with a hellish

dread of the consequences. I would scream and beg for mercy, but always relentlessly there would follow a series of excruciating pains which lasted all of a minute. With a rag or a tuft of grass in my mouth, I would lie doubled up like a foetus, kicking and groaning with pain ... while I continued. For I was determined to achieve the ultimate goal — I refused to give up, I refused! I cursed and I sobbed as I kept on. And then it would end. Without result! And terror seemed lurking in all things as I lay there sobbing with disappointment and defeat. And so it went each day — for perhaps this very day I should witness my glory!

When I glance at this, I am compelled to carve myself down into an eight-year-old again in order to perceive what it was, and again I suffer the pangs of the eight-year-old. Boys of this age, persecuted, pursued by a blood-thirsty hunting-party of teachers and parents should their “vice” be discovered! And the child has, of course, no more than given proof that he wills something and that he has an enormous store of energy to bring to bear. Upon rue this will had fastened a firm grip and it drove me forward, day after day, for months, years. When as a grown man I gained for the first time a clear perception of this, my hands shot out before me — my son! Do you appreciate now my double dread of Jante and my unwillingness to allow my own boy to grow up there?

The savage wills his way to his goal. He will go through hell and purgatory and later nail himself to the cross if this be the price he must pay. His is fortitude so unbounded that life can find no use for it. Each day for two years he took upon himself the excruciating pangs of childbirth. He would not be poorly endowed, he would not be a child, and — he paid the price. It was not for him to know that he was actually being deluded and that it lies within no man’s power to add a yard to his own growth. He was later to learn the meaning of delusion and out of that developed the greatest defeat in his life. He set his seal to that in Misery Harbour.

I have no small degree of respect for the ceremony of initiating the youth into manhood’s estate as practiced by certain tribes of African savages, which caused Fröken Nibe to cross herself in holy horror. For I have yet to hear of any manhood-initiation as gruesome and as protracted as that to which we were subjected at home in Jante.

There we had two: confirmation was the second and I am unable to say which of the two was the worse.

Each day represented a defeat, six hundred or more days of defeat, disgrace, disappointment, and failure too great to be borne. There was no sense of shame attached to the act itself, absolutely none — that belonged to another age — one's shame lay in the lack of result.

With the passage of a year and a half the after-effects diminished in strength. But all the way through it was a painful affair, never in any way performed for pleasure's sake or occasioned by lewd discussion. No one could have convinced me that the fruit of the tree was good to eat. But I soon found out how I could better endure it; I Was no longer obliged to go so far by myself in order to avoid detection. Previously, you see, I had been unable to refrain from screaming and crying... At all events, I would awake each morning with fresh hope: Perhaps today! It occurs to me again as I gaze back at this little man, what ends the human being might achieve if only he knew his own strength. This writhing maggot, his mind accepted no barriers, but they were there and then he showed his strength. He was willing to sacrifice everything. "I will reach the goal." Even the shadow of the gallows failed to halt him. Shall we speak again of perversion? And experiment with the lash?

We find ourselves at anchor in manhood. We refuse to understand the person who is under way. We fume whenever we encounter something still in the process of growth. We are unable to make the best of it and strike out with the whip. This is to inspire the child with terror. The growing being's terror of what does not grow. But we are adults and have no right to apply our fixed standards to the evanescent conditions in Fairyland. It is as stupid to hold the people of Fairyland accountable for their actions as it would be to criticize a frog's hind leg for responding to an electric current. We are so prone to measure a length of road with a liquid measure and to write pedagogically on our finding.

I have never, as an adult, lost sight of the fact that we + all are here together and have equal rights to exist. We must fall in line. The one who refuses or is unable to do so must be struck down for the good of the rest. This condition imposed by life we may hardly

hope to escape. But, as things exist today, humanity as a whole gives ground and allows itself to be knocked on the head to the advantage of the system. Perhaps there exist in Europe today five or ten persons to whom the ultimate profit accrues, but I doubt it.

Something which made it possible for me to keep on with the practice, though it clearly meant insanity for me at a later stage in life, was, of course, the certainty that my day of triumph was steadily drawing nearer. The notion of idle waiting has no place in Fairyland. It was, on the contrary, a most exasperating doctrine. A thing must be now, today! Life should be something fixed and stable, not something which is forever drifting ahead of itself.

The miracle came to pass one fine day which, in red letters, went down in the history of the world. And, with that, a deep sobriety of mind came over me. I did my best to furrow my brow. A great responsibility had fallen upon my shoulders. No longer did it make little difference what I did. I could be a father myself now, with no more trouble than that!

I was then in my eleventh year.

I came walking into the yard with full realization that I was now a grown-up man. There stood the youngest son of Jens Hansen, but upon him I did not deign to bestow so much as a single glance. I strode forth into the world in all my power and glory to fill it with bastard children.

Occasionally I glance into books on this general subject and “perversion” is nearly always given a prominent place. But one does not pervert oneself by entering the lists in the struggle for equality.

If any truth lay in all the claptrap spread by certain criminals on the subject of paralysis of the brain, locomotor ataxia, impotency, and so forth as the sinner’s penalty, no human race would exist today.

I dare say that every male is pretty well good for nothing at that age when one stands in awe of the opposite sex, but otherwise I, at least, have experienced little in the way of impotence, paralysis of the brain, or locomotor ataxia. My own health is excellent almost to the point of insolence.

It is commonly supposed that the correct procedure is to frighten the child into ceasing or never beginning, but cause and effect are directly at odds. Oho! it is only that the grown-ups want to keep us out of things! The öre frightened a child is, the more terrified he becomes and the more promptly and hysterically he will fling himself into the battle for equality. The direst threats and the most violent corporal punishment are the most effective means I know of to stimulate the battle for equality to such a pitch of intensity that the possibility of suicide draws nearer day by day.

# ON THE TARPEIAN ROCK

IT may be said that, in a way, I have had an easy time of it since ... since Misery Harbour. My resistance to knowledge grew weak after that, because I then had use for knowledge. During the age of puberty we erect heavy barricades against life, and these we abandon seldom if ever again, provided we do not, one fine day, come face to face with our own life-lie on the Tarpeian Rock and hear the question: Will you cast off the lie, or will you make the leap yourself?

I assailed the lie and escaped from the Tarpeian Rock. It has been my fate to have been always confronted by two alternatives and to have viewed each with equal dread. To live without falsehood or to die without truth — I do not know which is worse. So it was that night as I stood on the deck of the schooner Rurik off the coast of Newfoundland: I dared not leap into the sea and yet I was more frightened to remain. “Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” When, in all soberness, I had realized this — and decided to risk the consequences, the sensation I experienced was that of a journey without lights through a wartime danger zone. Dark hulls looming suddenly in the night without running-lights or greeting. I had ventured on a blind course, and who knows what one may encounter deep in the gloom? Does any person alive know. anything certain as to that? When the horizon has vanished and we are alone, what do we know then? And When we imagined we saw the horizon and it was light and there were many of us, what did we know then?

I felt compelled at that time to prove I *was* something. I lay prone beneath the Law of Jante. I was offered the choice — or rather brought it upon myself — of bathing alone, away from the other boys on the beach outside of Jante, or of meeting them on terms of equality. To be or not to be, that was the question. Daily for two long years I forced myself to go through more actual torments than nine average polar explorers could possibly recount. Then one day I come and am a hero. Am I able? Good Lord, yes, it has been thus with me for many, many years now.

It is a known fact that the heroes of daily life are the greatest. Character or will, as you prefer, is a highly rational expression of man's inability to omit specific actions. The will, a little streamer on a vessel's forepeak, indicates the direction of the wind, nothing more. But at the wheel a man stands shielding his face, a being who perhaps has no face at all, and this being at the wheel has decided that the vessel will round Cape Horn.

# ORIGINAL SIN

ORIGINAL sin is something which exists ill a literal sense, if, at length, one must discuss the question of sin. Original sin is the succession of abandoned stages of development we must pass through and leave behind us. Could we somehow manage to regard these stages of development objectively, they would be found to slug off like the skin of a snake. But the theologians see red when they hear of a biological and correctly inferred original sin which lives its time and dies a natural death. No, sin is the child, nature and development. As a consequence of the stupid theological construction of original sin, the child is assaulted and mistreated simply because he is a child — and out of this assault is created the chaos in life's ascent, the consciousness of sin involved in matters which the healthy individual, if left to himself, would simply have outgrown. But the purpose has been achieved. Original sin and dread have been preserved to the joy of holy church in general.

# CONFIRMATION

WHEN I contemplate the lad whose name was Espen Arnakke and the phrase “happy childhood” sounds in my ears, I am taken with the desire to indulge in a bit of reckoning of accounts. The boy had been forced into a corner. He “deserved” it perhaps, but, at all events, there he was. He was at odds with his family. He wrestled with his own development, determined to comprise the past with the present and with the future. He would spend five or six hours of each day in school, where he acquired knowledge both useful and useless, sometimes even harmful. He was deeply involved in his relations with his teachers. He had to work four hours a day as an errand-boy. His upbringing soon made him a kleptomaniac or a thief, as you will. He worked himself almost to death in this direction alone. The normal process of his development was interrupted and he drove himself forward toward sexual equality as I have just described it. He read much, mostly zoology. There existed no insect unknown to Espen. And, through it all, he found it necessary to cultivate undying hatred, now of one person, now of another, and there were none he overlooked.

It is my belief that this is a common childhood phenomenon, varying according to the individual child, but totaling the same effect in each case. On top of this, school and parents add their persecutions. The school weeds out “bad habits,” according to its own belief, but its only success lies in rendering these habits lifelong. And the parents compel the child’s every foolish passion to the boiling-point by preaching their proprietary rights to their children and by wielding the scepter of power. In the newspaper there on the table you will find an article headed: “How Long May We Claim Our Children?” As a matter of fact, we may not claim our children at all; we do not own them and we never have. And the child, in his own way, realizes this. His heart is a volcano of revolt long, long before his elders even surmise it.

The child who goes a step in advance of his normal development finds himself in a worse predicament than before. More mature, he now stands side by side with those he envies. But he still sees others above him. He looks with hatred upon this new link in the chain of growth; he is unable to adjust himself to it. He would himself be a part of this later generation. He is already out beyond his depth, but off he goes again, disappointed and hateful, in quest of a new goal.

The sum and substance of childhood was: Forward toward equality — and always before nature had arranged for it. But at length I had confirmation to look forward to, and for perhaps a year leading up to it, I was fairly at peace with myself. Now, thank God, the end of it all was in sight! The rock of our conviction was that childhood's regency is definitely concluded at confirmation. The confirmand is an adult and, as such, ascends the throne.

In school they had described in no uncertain terms what confirmation really was and instructed us in how we were to regard it. I do not know at all what they were talking about, though we learned the catechism by heart. But I did not want to listen to such stuff, which was an outrage against life as it appeared to me. Therefore I was considerably amazed at all the minister had to say, assuming, nevertheless, that it was simply the usual hocus-pocus people employed to make life more complicated than it was, to which we were compelled to listen. It was like pouring water on a duck's back. It in no way vexed us; we only laughed at the minister serving such confections to us, who knew better than to take them seriously. At home they were wiser; after the ceremony there was always someone who stood up to welcome the poor chap into the circle of his elders and who waxed tearful on the subject of vanished childhood.

The following day came the reaction. Then Jante laughed at us and at our clothes. And the day which followed that, on going to work in the shop or wherever our job happened to be, it was we who were the youngest, only small boys, bullied and beaten, with an enormous swell-headed lout over us, a mere boy like ourselves, only some six months older, but therefore at least not the is youngest. We became penalized for our age to a greater, extent than ever before; we wept secretly, clung convulsively to the dead illusion, and — refused our greetings to boys who had not as yet been confirmed!

But there was no one who would deign to greet *us*. We had been squeezed out of everything which had been a pleasure to us before, had deserted our childish joys, but found none to take their place.

After some months I formed the habit of sitting alone in the dark of an evening, often at home if no one were in the house, or out in the

woods, in the woodshed, or some even better place. I merely sat quietly by myself, sometimes for hours at a time. I was apathetic, I was tired. I had lost, the world was no good.

I was as sluggish and slow as a sloth and I became dull of mind as well. When I heard from others that I was a fool, I wept inwardly, for I knew it was true. I was unable to fathom the simplest problems. I was scolded and my sense of shame increased; I became even more stupid and more impossible because of it. My hope for equality slowly burned itself out: All had been in vain, all I myself had done. And confirmation, my official initiation into manhood's estate, was only a snare which now held me captive. I gave up, capitulated entirely.

And then there was that question of "celibacy." Before, you understand, it had been an honor, a victory. Now it engulfed me with an avalanche of shame. This was no sort of thing for men. Now that I had been confirmed, this would simply never do at all. I was no longer a little boy. A grown-up fellow had to have girls. And so the struggle shifted to a new and even more pernicious level. Now the burning question was: Show your manhood, or the Devil take you!

In line with all those who had gone on before, we ourselves now had to take up that struggle. But now, of course, the problem was not strictly a personal one. This time there was an outside phase to be considered — the girls; and they laughed at us.

But conquest, in due time, comes to all back home in Jante, after years have elapsed and spirits have congealed. Jante has a deft claw buried in the hearts of its people; few can escape making a conquest, and after they have conquered, they go on exhibiting their conquests — a wife, and children themselves approaching confirmation. What was there to it all, anyway? Did they think about it any longer, did it ever touch them still, the men who went past our door when the factory whistle blew?

The fourteen-year-old lad had lost. He would have to continue the struggle. But he was worn out and had become a laughingstock. He was no longer capable of doing battle, though he eyed no other goal. Listlessly, he hid himself and his fantasies away, did not reach

out beyond his base desires. Everything had appeared as repetition. Up until his eighteenth year there rose ever before him a more precipitous peak to scale than that which had confronted him prior to his confirmation. His defeat was beyond endurance. I fled into the slimy caverns of a dream life. There there were no bounds or limitations, there one fulfilled all desires which lay far beyond the normal goal. From then on, mine was no longer a desire for mere equality. The dull-witted, ineffectual being I had become no longer sought a place beside the others, as the boy he once was had done...

*Now he demanded to be far more than all the rest.*

But he no longer believed he would ever arrive at a level even faintly approximating theirs.

The transformation was complete in a brief space of time; it required no more than a few months, possibly even weeks. A few days after confirmation a certain man, in a quite innocent connection, had chanced to remark: “When you are grown up…”

This was not the first time I had heard this thought expressed and the bomb went off. I flew at the man like a mad dog. Taken by surprise, probably comprehending nothing, he knocked me down. I flew at him again, once more was stretched full-length by a blow from his fist, but still repeated my attack until at length I lay frothing with rage on the ground, this time unable to get up. Such was realization, after years of intense longing.

I became sluggish. Confirmation is Jante’s decisive assault upon individual man, who, laid flat, does not rise again. Confirmation is but the ratification of the Law of Jante.

But often I find myself obliged to think as follows: What would the Jante man do with his children were it not for such fixed points as baptism, school, confirmation — and how could he possibly weather life without marriage and formal interment? The Jante man who sticks blindly to his formalism may have heard of unbaptized, firmed children, but his principal concern is how they got their names, then! What, does one simply give them a name with no more than that, like a dog, and let them go about without belonging anywhere? Are they really one’s own children? The

universe seems on the point of collapse. I remember Uncle Frederik's sneer of derision when someone mentioned that there were children who had never been baptized. Uncle Frederik was by no means gullible. He had even gone on record as firmly convinced that all this talk about a heaven and a God was simply so much nonsense.

I can put it bluntly and say that the Jante man does not know what use children are to be put to if not precisely as subjects for baptism and confirmation. One lives to realize the forms.

That children are not "property" and are not created for some specific "use" — hm, let me hear you try to say *that* in Jante!

Confirmation fulfilled none of the promises it had held out to us; on the contrary, it stood us face to face with a new beginning — the whole process of growth had to be gone through again. Later on in life one looks back with pleasure upon those periods when the world seemed to go to pieces for us and when we found it necessary to reconstruct it from its very inception. But in such cases the question of one's own growth is no longer in the same way uppermost in one's mind.

The world had gone topsy-turvy. "Celibacy" had become a little-boy affair, a secret practice. All we had ever done earlier in life was now regarded as contemptible. And the girls would have only those who were older than *we*. We consoled ourselves as best we could: to be sure, *we* could not hope for favours from the girls in our own confirmation class, since they were forever running after older boys, but just you wait! After the next confirmation our turn would come!

But things failed to turn out so. For it then appeared that it was only lads of seventeen who found their way into the good graces of the opposite sex. We — we had become little boys again in the most pitiful sense of the word.

When "celibacy" seemed no longer right in the eyes of our fellows, the consciousness of sin crept into our lives. We grew to conceal our private practices, lied about girls, and in our own minds laid the blame for our lack of success with them to secret "celibacy." There came a period of lunatic brooding, a period the remnants of which

many of us carry along with us far into life.

My pet notion at that time was that my life had been wasted, ruined utterly by the unbearable load I was again finding impossible to shake off, a sense of being in some way overloaded at a time when my brain was still too little developed to act effectively in my defence. In point of fact, however, I was, of course, in no way *overloaded*.

I made myself believe that I was an interesting person. There was likewise a strong impulse to indulge in another line of brooding thought, based upon my hunger for equality with my elders.

At that time I still believed in “perversion” and I had gleaned from the Bible a splendid sentence concerned with offense and a certain millstone. This may go far to explain why, quite obviously, priests and ministers appear with something resembling a millstone worn about the neck.

# WIZARD AND MUTTONHEAD

I HAVE and always have had a good memory. I dare say there exists somewhere an intelligent explanation of what memory really is and of why certain individuals make use of it, others not. The human mind forgets nothing. Each blade of grass which has swayed in the wind before our eyes is noted down. Each change in the sky, each word we have heard, each pencil we have sharpened, and each morsel of food we have chewed. All are carefully noted and the record preserved until death steps in to efface it.

My conscious memory stored away everything my teachers ever told me, save that which had no bearing upon my struggle for equality. Such teaching was as impermanent in conscious effect as the scratchings of a pen dipped in water. I was often amazed, when talking with other boys, over how little they retained of that which they, too, had heard discussed. This embarrassed me, for it indicated that such things had therefore not been worth remembering. He who is small and subdued never believes in himself, not even when he is apparently in a position to vindicate

himself.

But my teachers were pleased that I was “attentive” and commended me for my attitude. Believing that such an attitude is an effect of will-power, they give high marks where it exists and punishment where it is lacking. But they are wrong; they can belabor a child into silence, but they cannot instill into him an attentive attitude through any form of punishment. They also must have believed that attentiveness was the direct result of personal deference. In reality I abhorred them, and my attentiveness was mainly due to the fact that I had something like glue in my brain; things I happened to hear stuck fast at a level of easy reference. Virtue or vice, this was the simple fact of the matter. But that was felt to be a mistake. The others were brighter and more indifferent to what the teachers said than I was. And there was no other explanation than that things quite individually stuck to me, and that is not exactly an explanation either.

This has persisted with me ever since. I hear people discussing the most irrelevant topics, but I always know something about them, I too, for one has, of course, heard, seen, and read everything possible if only one has for six months of one’s life subscribed to a newspaper. And I faithfully remember the whole mess.

As a child I used to lament this quality of mind, for it was simply impossible for me to conceal it. Whenever the teacher would put a question to the class, the answer to which lay in my mind, it would be beyond me to hold my tongue and I would be angry no less with the teacher who complimented me than with the boys who tittered. “Wizard!” they would whisper throughout the room. Oh, that name! Espen the Wizard — did it not sound like Eagle-eye or Hawk-foot? Now I have difficulty to understand why I used to suffer so intensely because of it. The memory of it no longer plays havoc with me, but in the past it would wound me beyond all power to heal. And it gave way to constant bickering and countless fist-fights. The teachers would glare with stupid irritation, as teachers will, when they heard of these altercations and would strike out indiscriminately. My worst bursts of fury all centred themselves on the question of my nickname.

To my astonishment, this name was forgotten after confirmation;

and certainly I have heard it no more than a time or two since then. My new colleagues in the work-shop had no knowledge of the name I had acquired in school, but every fellow, of course, had a nickname, so when the subject came up for discussion among the apprentices, I was asked to tell what mine was. To utter it to reveal the pitiful truth, was inconceivable. But to de' dare that I had never had a nickname was, I thought, equally out of the question. I should therefore have to make one up. And so, God help me, I stood there and lied that in school I had borne the name of Espen Muttonhead.

This lie carried its own ugly revenge. The others thought that the name sounded fine, and violence was often the result on that score. I had chosen the name my. self and ought therefore to have been satisfied with it, but it had been just as awful in the past when my school-mates had called me Wizard.

One's name is stable, it is the antithesis of the detested process of growth; one's name is what one actually strives to be, and will be, in anticipation. Therefore one's name is sacred. And through the years most people preserve an apparently meaningless emotional reaction to their name. This is due to a childish confusion of name and identity. Write, for example, Olsen with two l's — Olsen — and Olsen will never accept it throughout all eternity. He is at once assailed with misgivings as to how far he has actually come from being a true Olsen. The child Peter Olsen quite frequently shortens his name to P. Olsen later in life. We yearned for the day when people would no longer have to address us by our given name, and for a long time I used, in secret, to write my name on slips of paper as E. Arnakke. The given name represents the child, and, to the extent that a Rolf is pleased to forget his childhood, he signs himself simply R. Ask him what the R stands for and he will giggle in oafish confusion.

# WISH-DREAM

How I have envied the ant! In the ant-hill are found not simply male and female — the whole community is the individual, each ant being but a single unattached cell yielding at times to some mad whim of its own, without rendering the entire ant-hill insane

because of it. The human being must reconcile a thousand contradictions within his brain, but the ant community is full of independent contradictions. There is the ant, for example, which, white and blind, with an enormous abdomen, hangs by two legs from the roof and is all its life simply a reservoir; itself it consumes little or nothing, is simply filled and drained according to the requirement of the hill. Do I not sense what that means! It is the Narcissus of the ant community, it is a subject for elegy, it is at the age of confirmation, it is etheric, is drained and refilled, and merely hangs there smiling in its sleep. It smells its own sweat and has no devils in its heart, it is not in a strait-jacket behind a prison wall, as is the human Narcissus; it is not under guard in an institution where the guards are themselves afraid and where devils go about on tiptoe. It is independent; never has it been compelled to fight for its oneness, like a Paul.

Happy cast-out devil!

But the greatest thing in the world is to be a human being and achieve mastery over the thousand contradictions within a single personality, to detect them one by one and later to incorporate them all into a living whole.

One speaks of a well-rounded personality at every third person's death. But hardly has such an individual ever existed on earth. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the majority of us might become well rounded if only we were not to begrudge the same thing to others.

# THE ONE AND ONLY

I do not believe I have ever had a single aim other than the explanation of who I am and what the human being is. Whence? Why? But the man who, in making such inquiry, is not content with mere classroom bombast, but goes on inquiring without cease, and Year after year more to the point — such a man will not prove popular. For it is not intended that anyone shall have an answer; no one dares to read in the eyes of another that the latter has perhaps been vouchsafed an answer. For all the little ones who, according to

the Bible, are not to be offended against, suspect the vast cold which lies behind the warmth of life and they prefer not to know anything certain about the cold. They give preference to the bed-warmth of maudlin oratory.

I look at these chains of mine and I hear their iron clanking. And it is a sound which wrings tears from the prisoner's eyes.

There was a time when I laughed at the term "mental struggle." And that was not so long ago. The phrase always appears in some humorous connection and, in the sense in which it is commonly used, it bespeaks no struggle at all. But the thing which has always struck me in particular is that reference to mental struggle is made only when the victim has achieved through it some authorized conclusion. According to this, the whole sum and substance of mental struggle is the mere statement that it once existed.

Mental struggle may be one of many things, but most often it is something a speaker assumes in order to dupe an assemblage. But it may also be a weakening of the walls between spiritual spheres, the decay termed dread.

When the walls have collapsed, the individual fights for oneness or falls to earth. Most frequently he falls to earth.

These walls within the spirit of man ought never to have been built in the first place. But we are devils toward one another.

Human beings hold each other in check by means of terror. We fight to increase dread in others and to mask our own.

Man is naturally faint-hearted. That is his fundamental trait. Courage does not exist. Behind the grandest deed of heroism you will find a craven heart.

"Courage" exists, but that is something other than we believe it to be, provided we believe anything at all. Courage and cowardice are not contrary conceptions.

I stood in utter terror of my elders. And to such a degree that everything I have since undertaken has been in the nature of an

attempt at rehabilitation. And my efforts always failed simply because I was so mortally afraid.

Not so long ago I encountered an assertion made by a distinguished neurologist to the effect that the daily struggle involved in the life of the adult quite obviously leaves far stronger traces than any "scattered impressions of earliest childhood."

Thus speaks an ignorant man, and his utterance is biased. The child struggles also and does so constantly. Many adults do not struggle. But these words go farther and show that the man in question has conceived of life as a unit of distance, as, for example, from 1850 to 1925, a human being who bobs up out of the dust in one year and vanishes down into it in another. But life cannot be regarded in this light. We grow upward, culminate, and grow downward. An identical circumstance presented to us once while we are growing and once when we are down would produce two widely divergent effects. Try to thrust a steel rod into a stonecrusher while in operation and watch the result. When the machine is idle you need expect no astounding result from the experiment.

We speak of a child's formative years and deny the existence of formative elements.

There exist even people of brains who persist in the belief that life is a homogeneous stretch of highway and that the same measure of responsibility applies to young and old alike. But the child's responsibility is another order of responsibility, for the child is possessed of a different order of consciousness. The child is at an earlier stage of development. His thought-forms are purely visual. His consciousness is that of the animal. The adult is no more responsible for his own childhood than he is for hail and sunshine.

The child is on a mad chase after fresh experience day after day throughout the year, a condition which does not persist as he grows older, and he enjoys a special aptitude for experience which is soon lost. The mature person who has acquired another form of consciousness charges, like a bull, the uncomprehending child each hour of the day.

The child forgets —

No, that is precisely what this child does not do. We forget nothing. We live through our childhood to acquire experience for future use, not to forget the whole affair. But what we really prefer to believe is that childhood is a divine gift, a glorious Sunday prior to life's true beginning.

Childhood is the most difficult period of life, though we are prone to believe otherwise for the very reason that we prefer at all odds to forget evil times and for the additional reason that the whole of childhood's experience is not open to our gaze. To see the whole does not lie within the scheme of things, for if it did, it would only serve to bar the way to more life. But in the true sense we forget nothing, absolutely nothing; it is only that certain tilt are hidden from our view.

The individual may know everything about his own childhood if he so desires. But the truth is he does not desire such knowledge. And this is because we believe our-selves to be alone in these "deplorable" matters which are not to be matched with the standards of our present life. From this develops each human being's odd fancy that he is a unique specimen. We all have ghastly recollections in which we believe we are alone: I am the one and only! Then one assumes the pose of uniqueness, but, unfortunately, is unable to include in it that which is fundamental, for then the "one and only" would stand forth as the "one and only *swine*" and, hardly caring to appear as the world's only swine, one is no longer anxious to be unique in any sense.

# MAYBE YOU DON'T THINK I KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT YOU?

THERE was one murderous offshoot from the Law of Jante, a query we resorted to whenever we got into difficulties with each other. Oh, you will find in it only an element of humour, I am sure. The query was this:

Maybe you don't think I know something about you?

This constantly repeated stab succeeded in making each one of us from Jante, in our own consciousness, into a far worse swine than the meanest of all our fellows who smilingly went his way and appeared to have no care in the world. Today I am fully aware that these others were no less vile than I was myself. I do not say this with any view to aiding my own cause. As a matter of fact, it accomplishes nothing whatsoever which might be placed to my advantage.

Maybe you don't think I know something about you? That was terrorism's imperishable weapon. I recall how hopelessly beaten one felt at the impact of those Words. Some time ago in conversation with a certain physician _ no mean psychologist, either, by the way — I attempted to explain to him their effect. But he only stared at me uncomprehendingly and said:

"The normal response to that question is, of course, quite simple: What the devil do you know about me? Spit it out!"

No, this man was not from Jante. He will never understand!

Maybe you don't think I know something about you? This was no mere thrust in the dark. It was always more than likely that one's adversary was actually the possessor of specific knowledge. In the beginning we had battled for coequality as thieves and erotics. Later on we turned our common knowledge of the facts into clubs to use against each other.

In that way people were successful in holding each other down. Actions were never spoken of or even referred to until after the appearance of the first faint sign of revolt. But with this, the words would fall as inevitably as the amen which follows a prayer: Maybe you don't think I know something about you?

There was a girl about whom we knew something. It would be more accurate were I to say that there was a girl about whom we knew a great deal — so much, in fact, that she was really a colourful figure. Her name was Jenny and she was an expert in the art of terrorism. She had and always had had a fluent tongue and she was by no

means humbled by the fact that we knew too much. The one who might have risked an allusion would hardly take pains to cross her path in the future, for to do so meant only that he would immediately hear his own sins, both real and imaginary, shrieked from the housetops. No one ever seemed able to find either time or courage to pay her back in kind. She was an able terrorist and the savagery of her attack was always sure to gain the day. But persons of her disposition moved along a dangerous frontier. It was not a popular custom to exceed the point of simple innuendo, since *that* was usually adequate. Jante would strike back at such individuals by giving them a nasty reputation, whether they strictly deserved it or not.

Maybe you don't think I know something about you? With that vicious rusty knife we defended ourselves against each other. For many years afterwards I took pains to preserve this weapon and went on living with it constantly in my hand.

As a child I practiced with it in my dreams. In my mind it was a political weapon. First there were my teachers in school. I pretended that I knew something about a certain instructor, always something sexual which had to do with a child. And so I would say to him, in a grave and powerful voice, that it was simply impossible to put up with such conduct. He would beg for mercy and I would assume an air of magnanimity. I would become close friends with him and he would never again treat me as a child. We would engage in serious conversation during the walks we took together.

My dreams of the knife became more involved and extravagant. Later on I made it seem that I knew something about certain ministers of state, members of parliament, and the like, and through them I saw to it that good laws were passed. I imagined that a certain person of great note had committed some vague form of moral misconduct and this I used to control him. Always in my old magnanimous manner — I, at least, never gave my man away. But, one by one, I renounced all friendships. I then amused myself by writing a brief, ironical form of epistle whenever my victim carried on in a way I did not admire, and in each instance conditions would immediately improve. I even prevailed upon kings to abdicate and make way for republics...

However, what good does all that do a man?

One day, upon his return home, Father found Adamsen bulling a cow in front of our very door with a crowd of fascinated youngsters assembled to gape at the proceedings.

Father spoke right out: “You’d better get away with those animals of yours and stop carrying on such a business as that in the very middle of a public road!” Adamsen grinned. It was purely an affair of nature!

Shortly afterwards the incident was repeated, and this time Father saw to it that Adamsen received a warning from the police.

Perhaps a week went by. Then, early one morning, after Father had left the house, Mother was at work with some-thing outside in the yard. Suddenly something went whizzing by her head and struck the ground near by with a crash. Water and bits of shattered glass went flying. It was a corked bottle full of water. Mother whirled about and caught a fleeting glimpse of the man who had thrown it just as he was ducking down behind the wall surrounding the manure-pile.

Once I found myself puzzled as to why Father had reported to the police that act of cattle-breeding but not an obvious attempt at murder. But now I find it quite consistent with the general spirit of Jante as I see it today. I know now what thoughts lay in Father’s mind: Jante would only laugh! All just silly affectation on the part of Vilhelm Arnakke and that wife of his! What, kill people like them? Hehe! They’re only trying to put on airs to get into the limelight, hehe, it must be they think they are something!

Nothing must and nothing can happen to one person which does not happen to all. And it is also important to deny that such things ever do happen in the world. We don’t do like that here in this town, we don’t do like that here in Jante; no, we don’t now and we never did…

And the person to whom this interpretation is inapplicable is stealthily pursued with: Maybe you don’t think we know something about you?

In Jante hell breaks loose with justice and the entire machinery of the law moving into action behind it when one no more than casts a bit of rag on his neighbour's side-walk. And when anything of this nature occurs and, as a result, a man has had the law on him, there is nothing he can say in his own defence. The effect is Janteterror, that spirit of dread which makes it possible for a man to be struck to earth by the force of a single sentence: Maybe you don't think I know something about *you*?

A thousand times I have had this cast in my teeth. A thousand times I have cast it in the teeth of others. Maybe you don't think I know something about *you*? These words grip the whole of Jante in a vice of fear, binding us together in a kind of freemasonry which is that of slaves. But once a man actually *is* in the grip of the law, he is then no less in the grip of death itself. For it is then the flames of human viciousness burst forth in all their spiteful fury. The victim in this case can fall without endangering anyone else, and it is now harrowing to hear what Jante suddenly knows, knows about him and him alone.

For when a man falls, the people all rejoice: he was the one and only swine in the world and this is the day of his slaughter.

It is not meant that man shall talk. It was so arranged once long ago in the dawn of time. In tones of elegy and with rolling eyes human beings ask: Whence? Why? But if suddenly they hear something on the subject, they become furious. All this poetical soft soap of theirs has been brewed for purposes of concealment, not enlightenment It is so much wasted effort to turn one's gaze heavenward. In the fullness of time heaven will descend of its own accord. In so far as it can, if at all, be explained, the human being knows remarkably well whence he comes. Human beings will never know more than they know already concerning this problem. The human being knows all there is to know. But it is a tremendous task to unseal the secret knowledge we bear, for it is buried in the darkest cellars of our early childhood under a mountain of taboos and castigation.

The effort to confirm our ignorance is termed the road to the heights and eternal aspiration.

There is nothing on the heights to lure me; it is in the depths that I

have work. I, too, once had my mouth forced shut. But when the desire, the compulsion, to go backward in time engaged me, I broke the seal on my lips; I no longer found it possible to remain still. For many years silence had not been difficult for me to endure. For it was like talking to a blank wall whenever I attempted to speak. But then it came about that I simply had to talk out, if only to a blank wall. This compulsion did not develop gradually. Suddenly one morning it was with me, and has been with me ever since. My thought now, as I sit here, is to keep on talking until I have nothing left to say.

I had a fair knowledge of what I desired to talk about and what I willed to achieve thereby, though this was never fully clear to my mind, and I was continually obliged to make concessions in everything I said. I was probably on the right track, but after gazing into a pair of human eyes long enough, I found I no longer ventured to speak the truth. Everything seemed to become warped out of shape, to appear as half-truth, half-falsehood. I would take fright and adjust my words instantaneously to whomever I happened at the moment to be addressing.

There were also those who stood in awe of me. They said they felt only scorn for me. They said so to others. I found it interesting to pursue an analysis of the true nature of scorn, but this gained me nothing in the end. I hardly believe that one might have spoken of mental struggle then. A friend of mine with whom I used to converse quite a bit was very apt to make clumsy use of what he knew. I was only too well aware of this, and what truth he managed to get out of me was always well tempered with falsehood. I skulked behind the light of his tolerance. And there I learned something of the nature of tolerance. Thus does one acquire knowledge, though it proves of little real assistance. You simply ought to see a person like that who believes that now he knows something. Quite unexpectedly he switches off onto the subject of morality. His glance is furtive, but irritating. He tells how one should live, how one should behave. He is so afraid of having the rusty knife drop from his hand to the floor: Maybe you don’t think I know something about you?

And Espen Arnakke, who never in his life has been able to go at

anything by halves, Harboured a wicked thought: I shall break the rusty knife in the hand of mine enemies and tell them who I am. That will serve them right. I suffer no harm from their mere flourishings of a rusty knife, but it might be fun to have a look at them when they suddenly find themselves without it. The man who surrenders himself, I reasoned, is guilty of an evil act: he deprives all others, each in turn, of the illusion that he alone is a swine and a fascinating unique specimen. It I might be an agreeable experience to explode the suffocating belief in the one and only swine and thereby raise the level of self-respect.

# WITH WOMAN TO THE LAND OF CHILDHOOD

AFTER this, one might as well say that I marched forth into the wilderness alone, although there existed no wilderness and I was no ascetic.

Constantly with a woman at my side, I set out in search of childhood — the Promised Land. I was not always aware that it was there I would be. Moreover, in another sense, it is there that I have always remained. I have never relinquished my childhood, have always remained, so to speak, tangled up in it as in a net. But now I had definite business there. The people of Israel were guided on their way through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and fire, but I had the volcano in my breast and made for the sea to extinguish it.

I had arrived at the point where I was obliged to delve down into myself for the purpose of locating something I had lost, an explanation which lay hidden in a certain dark recess, evading quest. Something which lay buried, concealed, forgotten, but was there. The whole affair was obscure and my actions at that time give evidence of that. It is no small matter I wish undone back in that period of mental confusion when it certainly would have been best for myself as well as for others had I not been gifted with independence of action. And yet — God knows! The swiftest implement I know of with which to ruin a man completely is, I believe, the iron hand of restraint. I drilled down deep, down to the

level where the devils reside. And when one has reached the point of contact with his own devils and does not recognize them as such' it happens a bit too frequently that it is they who speak through his mouth. But my devils and I formed a coalition; we would sit in conference and talk things over together as I sat silently alone at night. When my fears would become too intense, my devils would likewise sometimes become afraid, for, you see, these devils perish with the human personality, and it is not their will to die. They would attempt to calm my fears in their devil fashion and would say to me: "Do you remember Elisabeth, do you remember Gerda and Ingeborg, now living alone?" And then I would get up and go for a walk with all my devils inside me, for we could not go on sitting there screaming at each other. There is something about a woman — she desires to be maternal and all that romantic bosh — how do I know? But I would run away from it when it became too uncomfortable for me, not to one in particular, of course, for there always had to be several, always a new one, of whom, as well, I would soon grow weary. No, each affair was poor at best. And these female persons caused me no end of trouble, too; one stood on the stairs, another in the doorway, and two more on the street. I was afraid of them and once developed the fancy: I'll have them all fall in and parade in full uniform in some open place. Forward — march! Halt! And then I would draw my sabre and thrust it clean through my own body and fall crumpled up from my horse and listen to my own howls of distress as I lay there dying. That would serve them right!

And during my hours alone at night, there also came into my room a few times a man who whistled. He would always stand with his back to me, whistling. It was a down-right damnable experience and my very hair would grow cold. And in the morning I would have to cross the room and feel the floor where he had stood. Things like this were bound to lead to spiritualism? No, I have no such high esteem for spirits, either. Physical perception and mental conception are too mysteriously interrelated to permit one to rely absolutely upon what the eye registers.

Much happened at that time which might have been interpreted as degeneracy. But I always kept a little lamp burning outside myself and, with full consciousness of what I was doing, I would enter the

dark cave of delirium in order to discover what lay hidden there. You see, my dread had grown to such proportions that I was unable simply to pass it off as “nerves,” as persons in other circumstances may do. My dread had become so erroneous that it had fairly wrenched me inside out, and dread is an odd medal: on the reverse side is stamped “courage.”

The whole thing was no more than quite ordinary preparation for some ultra-thorough house-cleaning, with the contents of the house assembled in one room and a beastly echo resounding from all those bare walls…After which, I fell to with a broom, soap and water, and a rag.

I was so utterly brave about it that I began with something I had been fond of, but which had really been only a swindle. It was a decoration which bore the stamp of “Strongman.” This I flung out of the window. Cold-bloodedly I had discarded this fraudulent trademark a year or two before, and, amusing as it may seem, to the extreme disapproval of my friends and my enemies alike. When one has something fine in one’s possession it is hardly gratitude to say to hell with it. So be it; I shall no be even more impudent and add that I snatched the decoration from my breast because I had become even stronger than before. No doubt you will consider this a somewhat conceited remark. But I had reached the point where one says: To be or not to be.

For what had I acquired this embellishment? It had not had the slightest thing in the world to do with either strength or weakness. It had merely had something to do with terror. I had presented myself with this medal in honour of those who had always said that I was not something. It was to be a blight on the souls of those who had fancied they were something and who had said that I fancied I was something. And it functioned admirably. I had effected a series of those conquests which serve to make a man seem smaller and smaller, which keep on diminishing him until he is only a centimetre above the ground and can no longer be discerned among the leaves of the laurel which once crowned his brow, save by the experts who know where to look.

I have spoken much on the subject of the dread which afflicts the child; we drag it along with us as we grow older; we are

incomparably afraid of each other. Why? We live in a society which, to a certain extent, at least assures us that we have no occasion to go about in a perpetual state of trepidation. But from childhood on we are ground beneath the heel of terrorism and believe that it is therefore essential for us to exercise terror in our own defense. There are still but few who will admit this. Each evening they sit down and polish up their medals for use on the morrow. But terror breaks out in every social relationship, in what we term free competition, in newspapers, for example, which, with hoots of raucous joy, report each other's misprints simply because they have typographical errors on the brain.

When I sit opposite a person who is wearing about his neck the decoration I have thrown on the ash-heap, I perceive at once his entire stock in trade: self-consciousness, uncertainty which has developed into a crude form of confidence or an annihilating superciliousness, the basis for which the observer sits racking his brains to detect.

# IN BORNHOLM HE ASSAULTED A LADY

I SHALL tell you of a sorry little incident which occurred in my sixteenth year, when I was extremely girl-shy. Women were beyond my strength and capacity. But aboard ship, naturally, I could not help indulging in a few boasts. The vessel arrived at Bornholm and there, suddenly, I could stand it no longer that the whole thing should be no more than a hollow boast. But — what was I to do? In the mere presence of a woman my heart would fall to beating so violently that I would be unable to get a word past my chattering teeth. And then I decided to commit rape. If, at this point, we desire to be really profound, it is obvious that that affair was in the nature of a preliminary or dress-rehearsal for the one which was to follow some time later in Misery Harbour.

I recall that my father placed no credence in rape. He was most energetic in his disbelief in the physical possibility of ravishment. Once, while discussing the matter with him, I remarked that, even if

the girl were like enough able to impede the assault, her success did not, of course, remove the menace to her person. What if she now believed her very life to be in danger?

Father looked at me for a time, then shook his head. He simply could not bring himself to believe in the fact of rape.

I came close to proving him correct in his stand. To be sure, I have but a single example to cite, but this shows very clearly that it is the aggressor who breaks down first. One resorts to ravishment certainly not because one is brutal and vile but because one is as furtive as a hare. The felon does not even dare look the girl in the eyes. perhaps there are those who are forced to commit violence because they are able to find release in violence alone, but I do not belong in that category.

Nor, of course, can the person who is frightened ever go so far as to commit actual rape, if at length it comes to a showdown. Tragedy occurs only because the woman shows fight. Were she calmly to await developments, she would suddenly find herself alone, without having suffered the least physical molestation. She can be assured of absolute safety in this respect…

So was the girl in Bornholm, after her own fashion. The man or, rather, boy she ran afoul of was not only a victim of defeat, he was Defeat itself. I gave her a chance to run away. But she made no move to flee. I embraced her again with simulated fierceness, but this was likewise ineffective; she fought me without realizing that she was free. Again I released her, tentatively. She remained where she was and begged for mercy. On the verge of tears, I flung myself upon her a third time and she, poor member of the frail sex, was utterly unable to tear herself free. And for the third time I let her go. She stood with downcast eyes and told me I mustn't do such a thing! Whereupon I fled the field of battle at a speed which did me proud.

You regard this as an amusing incident, but, I assure you, it contains not the slightest element of humor. I have never ventured to set foot in Bornholm since that day.

# MEN OF COURAGE

THE VICTIM of terror is so ground down that he may just as well spare himself all forms of inconvenience. He knows that victory for him is out of the question. It appears to him as a phantom, and the day he finds himself in its presence, he flees the interview in a panic of fear. He forthwith takes refuge in fictional conquest, leaving the matter of factual conquest to others that is, if such a thing as conquest in fact exists. The strongman pose can be assumed only by those who have never tasted victory. The mighty Don Juan is at home in this category. Somewhere in the mind we have a tumor which presses on the brain, and to its divers manifestations we have attached high- or low-sounding labels, according to our hallucination of the moment: strength or weakness of character, courage or cowardice, and other such inane designations. I was extremely wise when, at the age of fifteen, I could already interest myself in the discussion of whether suicide involved courage or cowardice. The essence of the problem itself is quite beside the point. The human being is always craven whether his decision is to shoot himself or to live on. But every day of our lives we encounter situations in which, of two alternatives, we choose that which demands the lesser degree of true courage. And so it is that Espen Arnakke leaps into the Atlantic because that involves less than does the proximity of a detested person. The true motives which lie beneath our acts we are often successful in masking from ourselves and from others alike. Who was to know of Espen's dread and disgrace? For years he, too, viewed himself only as that prodigious blond creature THE HERO, who one night came swimming in from the open sea and stepped ashore on Dead Man's Point.

But he was only a pathetic boy who no longer dared pursue the trail of his life on the deck of a ship.

My past as a man breaks in and fills me with shame whenever I stand before manly persons. I have become so masculine that I am able to see through those who balance their way forward through the world as men, though in makeup they are really 49.75 per cent women. Shall forget what I gave the most precious years of my life to learn? I stoop beneath the crushing weight of terror no longer.

You others may gasp with admiration as much as you like; I myself have had enough of heroes and no longer find them admirable. Why do we erect certain ideals of manhood unless it be that they are false?

We have become what we are today under pressure of terror, and, in turn, we devote our time to keeping terror alive in the world. It had become a vital issue with me to know something of the very essence of terror, and therefore I did not permit myself to become frightened by superior numbers — there were things I feared far more. Moreover, it was nothing new to find myself outnumbered by the enemy. When had I ever been free from that condition? Was mere force of numbers to be allowed to reduce me back to thralldom? Were they again, and this time decisively, to fasten their mailed fingers about the throat of the runaway thrall?

I had only to rely upon myself and to employ that form of research which at last and for all time had become my own. From the *thinker* one gains an understanding of the very thing I myself have at all times shunned. Thinking, in the academic sense, is a special and thoroughly cultivated bluff in the struggle for existence, and it calls to mind, in a fair way, the case of the hen and the chalkline. If the hen so much as bats an eye, she takes a crack on the head from the other thinkers for not sticking to the matter in hand. When I glance at a book today which, from beginning to end, is no more than a chalk-line, I still recognize a feeble remnant of my old holy thrill for science, but I soon realize that the book is only a panic-stricken person's experiment with terror and I read it with many a bat of the eye, as I did when I pored over the book of Life. Long have I realized that too much logic at any one, time smells suspicious. A thesis fully documented and rendered as clear as day is absolutely not worth the trouble to read. By the pricking of my thumbs I am always able to tell that such a book is a piece of villainy and that the conclusions drawn might as easily have been anything else imaginable, with no sacrifice of logical development at any single point. An apt example is that of two kings who are brothers — one is a direct descendant of Harold the Fairhaired, the other from Gorm the Elder. Both lines are established with flawless accuracy and all conclusions are drawn by men of science who are fully aware of the chalk-line's fundamental significance.

# A STRANGER AMONG THE OLD AND WISE

I SEE before me a man at work with a plough. He halts and looks around: Ah, it begins to look like a field!

I was compelled to use my brain in order to hold my own against my elders and later against the calamity which befell me. Most of us, during our youth, are continually at grips with the effects of dual personality and will have none of it. I myself have always held fast to this principle of duality, and therein I differ from the true thinker.

Certainly the personality responsible for my crime was no embryo thinker. It was that other personality — the hallucinist. I have never let him go and he has taught me many things; it was he who directed me along the roads which led to Misery Harbour. This the thinker could never have done.

Later in life, I was put to great pains to acquire the barren waste of a rational mind, for this I had not possessed to begin with — I had been totally lacking in that surface which others took to be everything. My perception was visionary; I dreamed existence into my head without being a dreamer. I thought as the animal thinks, I had preserved my childhood. And often, in the very act of talking or writing, I am suddenly astounded by the thought that this is really I. Again an expression of the struggle for equality: the others were fluent and adroit in the handling of words, whereas I could barely talk; language seemed foreign to me. It will always be foreign to my nature; possibly I ought to have been a painter, though this perhaps lay too close to home — moreover, I convinced myself in time that, of course, I had not the slightest talent for art…

No, I was late in finding my way forward to words and speech. It was like acquiring a foreign language. But, although the visionary thought-process is certainly an abandoned stage of development, I cannot bring myself to regard it as a lower. You see, I am myself rather strongly involved in the matter. It cannot be so terribly long

ago that the human race as a whole drew away from it; in Christianity we perceive how visionary thought paved a way, as obvious as any highway of the state, through Paul to a triangular formalism.

In any event, formalism, for the time being, lies stranded on its own Ararat. Humanity cries out in torment. I am a traitor who, in time, took refuge in something better. I have been sensible that one must not frighten the soul; one must cultivate it and free it from its bonds.

# THE SLAVE-TRADER

WE were only two little boys, all of eleven years old. His name was Alfred and he tempted me with his sister. He had eyes which glittered with greed. He tempted his sister with me. He went back and forth from one to the other every day for several months. He spoke in a superior manner of such things; it was such a natural thing and so on. I, too, puffed out my chest and assumed an air of maturity only because Alfred did and because I had but recently proved definitely to myself that I was mature. He gradually stilled my fears, the old method of the tempter, the agent *provocateur*, the terrorist. His sister became mine in Adamsen's barn.

Later I encountered Alfred and I can still see the sneer on his face as he stood before me, his bright gaze faltering as he spoke the words: "Maybe you don't think I know something about you?"

My blood was iced with fear — it was as though a black and haunting abyss lay yawning beneath my feet.

And the slave-trader went to his sister and said: "Maybe you don't think I know something about you?"

And together they made for Adamsen's barn.

# WITNESS-DREAD

THE agents of the law are Jante's mighty foes; today justice still functions there in the manner of Pontius Pilate, save that it does not wash its hands.

During my childhood a murder was committed which has never been solved to this day. The half-nude body of a girl was found lying, with her throat cut, in a ravine. Whenever a murder strikes awe to the general mind, a Jante says more than it actually dares. A mysterious rumor concerning the girl and her father reaches the ears of the police. He is arrested. But he says nothing, merely shakes his head and knows nothing. And then the case is dropped…

The odd thing was that the police did not handle the case in their usual manner. It was a matter of widespread opinion that the people of the parish were fully cognizant of all the facts in the case. Every so often, with the passing of the years — the last time was two years ago — the police would attempt to storm the parish, but each time they would butt their heads against a blank wall. The police are always ready to take their oath that the information they seek dwells in the minds of the people as a whole.

The mistake the police made in this instance was that they did not take the trouble to fish in the troubled waters while the people of Jante were in holiday attire for the crucifixion. Enough time was allowed to elapse for a murmur to seep through the parish: Maybe you don't think we know something about you?

And Jante lays its holiday attire back in the chest. One really has no desire to bring calamity upon anyone; no, of course not. It goes without saying that one is able, with full peace of mind, to partake of the sacral feast, but it is by no means pleasant to have to mount the sacrificial block oneself.

Had they ever had the slightest prospect of finding themselves there? Hardly. The vast majority, in all likelihood, have never engaged in anything unlawful. But forth from the dark cellar of the soul mounts the ancient danger-signal, inexorable and terrible, the voice of the Law of Jante: Maybe you don't think I know something about you?

We all have been children!

This happened in another Jante, but the difference is zero, and the murder occupied us considerably; the human heart bounds with delight when there is a scent of blood and adultery in the air. I can relate an incident, something I saw and heard at first hand, which will show how the terror bursts forth with clenched fists when a human being has stumbled and is on the point of falling. A man who committed a childish action and defended himself with childish terror.

His name was Andreas Henriksen and he had lodgings with a family in town. There was a twenty-year-old daughter in the household and one night she was awakened by the presence of someone in her room. She struck a light and saw that it was Henriksen and that he was attired in slippers in addition to his skin. He begged her not to tell anyone and was prepared to steal from the room. But the girl screamed and her parents arrived on the run.

I believe that the girl might better have laughed at a ninny such as he. This would have been cruelty itself, but, after all, we are humanly entitled to a certain degree of privacy, including a night of undisturbed slumber. She did not laugh. She screamed, for she had certain notions regarding modesty; she took it for granted that the human form is horrid and that it really may not be said to exist unadorned by a shirt. And Jante allowed itself to become paralyzed by horrid sights because Jante's eyes wore stilts.

The girl's father also enjoyed the ability to become agitated. Without a moment's delay he pitched Henriksen's furniture out of the house in the rain. Henriksen himself was compelled to lend a hand, and there in the morning stood the proof of his opprobrium fair in the middle of the road.

The news of his adventure preceded him to the factory, and when he arrived at work, he was obliged to pass through sneering rows of fellow-workers. Andreas bowed his head and said nothing. But there came another day and his comrades, it seemed, had not even yet derived a plenitude of joy from the situation. It was then that Andreas showed his teeth; the Jante man saw himself at bay in a corner. This was going too far. Maybe you don't think I know something about you? No, in this case a stronger soap was required, and lye and soda, to boot. "Maybeyou-don't-think-I-know-

something-about-you" is a contrivance one uses to prevent the dam from bursting. But when the first crack appears, it is not sufficient that one perhaps knows a thing or two in a general way. In such a case the terror must be applied directly, with definite accusations. So be it, a lie; the main thing is that the victim knows full well that others will gladly believe it of him...

Andreas bared his teeth. To the first man who uttered a remark when he came in, Andreas turned and said: "It would be better for you if you'd keep track of what those young ones of yours are up to after you've left in the morning!"

The man stared for a second without opening his mouth again. What did Andreas know? Did he know something definite? He was a Jante person; the bullet whistled and found its mark. He carried it further; another man began quite irrelevantly to sneer, but Andreas, sensing the weapon in his hand, retorted: "It's a good thing I haven't got any daughters, it is! "

Silence of the grave.

One must not say such things. The howls of the victim must not be given direction. If one man falls, he must not begrudge the others their joy. But Andreas emerged as a witness, and that is beyond all forgiveness. The silence of the Law of Jante descended over Andreas Henriksen and shortly afterwards he moved away to another town.

As a child Andreas had entered the girl's room, and as a child he had fought for his freedom. The others, too became children in their turn; they stared at him, their jaws sagging with fright.

Witness-dread is found in mature circles as well — the law has it to combat every day, little realizing to what extent it is at grips with a phantom. It was enough of a problem in earlier days, but with the advent of formal administration of justice the witness retired to the Antipodes. It has happened that people have hanged themselves in preference to taking the stand in a case over a burst water-main. The police come in daily contact with this sort of thing; all manner of enticing bait must be offered, cordial assurances over the radio, and even handsome fees. And the witnesses stay right where they are, remain hidden in their homes and believe that it is they who

are the murderers. Within them like a flame burns the fear of having to uncover something in the presence of all the world... Who is in the courtroom? Who will read the minutes? Who will listen to the broadcast? The witness sees himself hailed before the bar of justice, always with one menace which keeps ringing in his ears: Maybe you don't think I know something about *you*?

This senseless witness-dread of ours is something we have carried over from our earliest days. In our school-books there appeared sunshine stories about plucky lads who never tattle, and the teacher would wax emotional as he read aloud about such plucky lads, whom he would thrash within an inch of their lives if, two minutes later, they were to prove unwilling to take a stick to the ideal. During my schooldays there was one occasion when I was called upon to tell just what boy had committed a nuisance in the lavatory — the teacher was confident I knew something about it and, after a time, I blurted out a name. But then I was also commanded to give the details of the boy's conduct and this I refused to do. I did not dare. But that towering bully kept after me so long that at last I was obliged to come out with it. Then you ought to have seen his face! His eyes spat fire at me just because I had dared to say such a thing. A cap was involved in the affair — it had been dipped in the excrement. Would you like to know what the witness received for his pains? Very well, that filthy swine picked up the cap from the floor by the part that was clean — and it was a witness, too — held it in his right hand, grabbed me by the hair with his left, and struck me with the part which was covered with dung — three, four, five blows. The culprit himself? He was reprimanded and ordered to remove the cap from the room.

I have related this incident in particular because it is such a horrible example, but I remember no end of parallel cases. It was the witness who was always persecuted. The dirty dog is possessed of a bit of actual knowledge and that cannot be tolerated; therefore the lyric prose concerning plucky lads who never carry tales. Such stories are written by culprits about witnesses.

Upon the child betraying the slightest knowledge of something which others had done was placed the full burden of the deed itself. The same applied to the victim. The little girl who has been

violated in Jante bears a life-long stigma; of her almost anything can be expected, and it is these very expectations, of which she is fully aware, that in time lead her, as often as not, to realize them in part at least. We bow in all ways to our elders. The one in whom no one believes goes, of his own volition, to hell.

We knew that, knew it both by so-called instinct and by experience. Once we became victims of ill-treatment, our world was one of terror and we feared detection to as great an extent as the actual culprit. And were we by mere chance to stumble upon the slightest degree of knowledge of something in which we ourselves were in no way involved, the state of affairs was no better. We would thereafter be pursued by threatening looks from those who were the gods of our world; at home and in school we would feel those glances upon us. Years later people might let fall remarks still barbed with mysterious spite. During my childhood no one could have induced me to give away a moral culprit without hanging me up by my thumbs.

The witness was the true sinner and bore the consequences of the sin. When the truth of this occurred to me, I was compelled to consider the martyrs of religion and promptly delved into church history. My suspicions were confirmed. Ecclesiastical literature as a whole is but a set of object-lessons in how a serviceable witness is to conduct himself. None of these are witnesses, none has ever said anything other than amen. Had I betrayed but a fraction of what I really knew at that time, Mother would have shed tears over me, and my teachers would have borne carefully in mind that here was one more child inexorably on the way to his doom. If that is not medieval, I do not know what it is! It is the Law of Jante that is brainless and unsparing because its practitioners never allow their right hand to know what their left hand doeth...

There was a sight I once witnessed on a street in Jante which I shall never forget as long as I live. A certain merchant I knew was standing outside his store chatting with another man who was as big and fat as himself. I was walking in their direction. A short distance ahead of me a little girl was walking. As she passed the merchant and his friend, they ceased their chatter to ogle her. As I came within ear-shot I heard what they said. “Oh yes, that’s her all

right," they said...

There had been an affair; the fellow had been arrested. And she was the victim.

I looked up into the faces of those two grown men and felt afraid. Their lips were wet, their eyes beady, as they stood staring after the little one who had passed. And the sneering laugh they uttered still causes me to shudder when I think of it thirty years later.

It is said that we are not to concern ourselves with the affairs of the past. New problems have entered our lives. It is a waste of time to dwell on the past. Those who voice this doctrine are people of refinement one may allow in one's house. But I, for one, will not allow them in my house.

We will continue to persecute the witness precisely so long as we preserve the idiotic notion that we have something to fear and just so long as we hold that dread is better than knowledge. Knowledge involves peril; and knowledge is independence and can convince anyone who will unbend that he is not the world's one and only swine. And, with that, all dread vanishes. We know too little about ourselves, so little, in fact, that we believe the witness knows more. One cannot know too much about oneself, as certain phrenetic drones believe. Joy and self-respect increase with knowledge.

But the war on stupidity will not be over next Friday. We have too many speculators in human dread for that.

I cannot but admit that I am still under the restraint of Jante, where thought appears wearing a chastity-belt: You must know nothing, for if you do, you are a scamp.

I still feel myself in the grip of that which commands: You must not make a laughing-stock of yourself with such matters as only priests and writers may talk about; you have permission only to say that it is fine weather we are having today, or perhaps that the weather is vile, or to mention the potato crop and the wretched condition of your duodenum. But you must never venture deeper than this, in order that no one may suffer embarrassment on your behalf. Do not attempt to paint tomorrow's dawn; if you do, people will lower

their gaze and sense danger in the offing. They scent wisdom as the Devil scents the blood of a Christian. But it may be your experience once or twice in your life, if you ever find yourself alone with a Jante man, that he will slip off his coat of mail. The fellow must have air. Under these circumstances there will be in his voice something strangely akin to tears. But how will he be able to clear up this tangle of error and aberration? He did not embrace his opportunity in his youth, and opportunity never knocked at his door again.

The ban against thinking and talking was the most difficult of all the barriers which stood in my way at the time when I was urged and determined to find my way forward to knowledge. Jante has imprisoned true knowledge within a mighty fortress of steel and concrete. It is impossible to penetrate those walls with any known tool or even dynamite charges. And yet it will hold open the door at the slightest suggestion of childish magic. I employ this often, have used it many times here, the child's form of argumentation: I merely sit here talking, don't you see, and why mustn't I do that? I'm talking, that's all, and surely there can't be any harm in that. I'm only going on saying things; what difference does it make if I merely go on talking? That can't possibly harm anyone, so let me go on talking. Why mustn't I, if I sit quite still and talk? It doesn't make any difference what I'm saying, I'm only just sitting here talking…

Jante still has its hook in me, though you would deny this could you have seen how I have changed. But Jante is losing its grip on me. It has already been some time now since I first dared let a woman go when she did not desire to go. It no longer concerns any poor devil in my heart whether or not my potency be vast and established. I changed my heaven. Or rather I have lost my heaven. He who tears down his heaven will hardly gain another, And this is only for the best.

# A VENAL MOTHER

THE WITNESS or the victim is made to seem the culprit but has it not always been thus? No, it has not; life can be much more

involved than that. There was the case of a wholesaler named Österby and the girl Ludovika. In the end it was something of a problem to decide just who the true culprit was.

We children knew a little of everything down in our own little world, but we kept still about what we knew because we were clear in our minds that this was the wiser course. For one thing, we had long known about Ludovika and Österby. She herself was interestingly reticent whenever the subject was mentioned, but she found it impossible to keep her mouth shut entirely — she found it necessary to make certain allusions to a pocket handkerchief and a window: unless the handkerchief were observed hanging out of the window, Ludovika never entered the house.

She was *refined*. It is singular about the children of the working class — some are refined, others not. I have mentioned this before and have perhaps offered you a partial explanation. It had nothing to do with money, at least not superficially. Ole Espen Andersen was refined and so was Georg Holm. As they grew a little older, refined persons of their type would refer constantly to "common labourers." The labourer is always dissatisfied with his lot, one of my elegant cousins once remarked to me — "We others are often likely to find greater contentment."

Ludovika was a seamstress, though this has no direct bearing on the question of folly. She was refined. She was short and plump. She carried herself, when she appeared on the street, with utmost dignity, and she was Fröken Nibe's pride and joy. Fru Österby was an awesome woman of authentic refinement, stiff and unapproachable of manner — she was active in foreign mission work.

Much that is strange happens in the world and it is hardly likely that any really dangerous witnesses would ever have stumbled upon the fact as it existed between Österby and Ludovika had the former not forgotten one day to pull down a window-shade. Over in the neighbouring yard there were so many who had an unbridled view of the affair that the usual witnessdread was weakened considerably through its wide distribution. The meshes of the Law of Jante are fine and protect all parties; that is to say, hold all parties down. But ill luck was in the wind that day and Österby slipped through; it

was so utterly reassuring to oneself to know such things about a really refined man.

Ludovika's mother did not go to the police. She went to Österby and shed tears for poor Ludovika...

Shortly afterwards Ludovika's brother started up in business. Ludovika's mother purchased a pretty little garden. Ludovika's father was a well-digger, but now he suddenly took to going about the countryside on a motorcycle. Österby grew thin and began spending long hours at night poring over his ledgers; a Jante merchant can be well off, but seldom is he a millionaire.

Of course, there existed a sure way out of his difficulty: Österby could tell his wife everything, for this was the sole threat which was being held over his head. To go to the police was one thing Ludovika's refined family had, from the very beginning, been barred by nature from doing. But Österby could not bring himself to tell his wife. Moreover, since he was in the bag anyway, the pocket handkerchief still continued at times to grace his window.

It went as it has gone in such matters ever since the world began: first he ruined himself and received the knife in his breast in the end, even so. Fru Österby wept and screamed and carried on. A week later the couple left town.

It is clear that one is compelled to pity Fru Österby, and that is what Jante did after its malicious satisfaction had worn itself out. But one might, for example, have done so somewhat sooner. Ludovika likewise becomes the object of our pity, but no one in Jante pitied her — it was her mother they pitied, that she should have had such a daughter!

The only purpose of this anecdote is to show that the witnesses really do dare talk out when they are of sufficient number and when the situation may be distorted in such a way that the witnesses are fully able to convince each other that they would never have thought of doing such a thing themselves!

Witness-dread and witness-terror are a living documentation of the fact that one has a certain stratum of society exactly where one

wants it. “He had the common man’s unwillingness to allow the authorities to mix up in the affair” is an almost standard cliché in the press. Circumstances as such may be well known, but no one cares to see what lies beneath. We have imbued our slaves with a consciousness of sin through aid from church and school. But terror they manage of their own accord.

# THE STARVING ARTIST

THE CHILD senses its lowly position and is at a loss to understand the why and the wherefore. Exactly as meagre as the adult’s is the child’s knowledge of the essence and object of the terror. The child believes in reward and punishment, in equitable gratitude and retributive justice. Therefore the child very early in life seeks the cause of the terrorism he is forced to endure. “What can be wrong with me?” he asks. “What have I done?” The consciousness of sin is created on is growth of biological original sin, the name of which is the child’s sole sin is that he does not fall from a machine, a standardized die-cut adult already thirty years of age.

The child inquires: “What have I done?” Or the question is often put in this form: “What is there about roe that makes me seem so impossible in the eyes of others? How can I manage to change?”

We read much nonsense to the effect that children strive to excel. This they never do. They strive rather to become like all the rest. It is not until after they have failed utterly in this particular that they drown themselves in the fantasy of becoming the one and only. The child desires to shine, but only in recognized and authorized fields. To be something in a personal sense apart is the child’s grave fear. Not until he attains to the age of puberty does he take the desperate leap in that direction.

What is wrong with me? Many children, as a consequence of this query, fasten upon the notion that they are ugly, horribly ugly.

Early in life I was permitted to hear that I was thick-headed and too fat. This strikes me as odd today when I glance at a couple of childhood photographs of myself. But my head was large. They told

me I was thick-headed. It must certainly have been this fact that later caused me to give myself the nickname Muttonhead. My place had been with the older apprentices, with whom it was necessary to ingratiate oneself, and it was in compliment to them that I called myself a muttonhead, as it was an explicit assurance that I by no means considered myself to be as much as they, that I by no means thought I was something. These early photographs in my possession reveal nothing in the way of thick-headedness, and show have that it would not have harmed me in the least to worn a little more, rather than less, fat on my bones. But my head has not been able to realize that condition which both Jante and I seemed to demand of it. It was a bit too large and it had heavy features. Jante insisted that it was thick and ugly. It was not only that “Little Brother” should be punished for merely existing. Guilt had to have some concrete basis as well.

Because he existed — that causes me to remember a certain encounter I once had with my father. I had been driven to the point of saying that I had not asked to come into the world. Father looked calmly at me, stroked his beard, and said in an even voice: “Nor did anyone, I believe, ever exactly send for *you* in particular.”

That was exquisitely said. That remark of my father’s carried me over a whole mountain of philosophical tommyrot. That man knew the very essence of things.

They said that I was ugly. And so you may say that I have been vain. Yes, naturally. But vanity is the struggle for coequality and is not a cause. It is an effect. Oh, all these deprecatory taunts we fling at each other in order to defend ourselves against the results of our own baseness!

The Jante person judges a face according to whether it is commonplace and expressionless or whether it is somehow stamped with individuality. If the former, it is a thing of beauty; if the latter, of sheer ugliness. Some years ago I had a job as a guard in a museum. The museum staff was very much annoyed over the fact that the office always saw to it that the whitest sculptures were hidden away in the basement while the gray and battered head of Tiberius had a whole alcove to itself. The servants of the museum never bowed to the opinion of the director except in cases of

necessity. They would laugh in their sleeves at the man, and were indignant on behalf of the public because the most beautiful works of art were rendered inaccessible. These very works were, more often than not, hopelessly begrimed, odd pieces which perhaps had been “thrown in” along with more important acquisitions, or however it was. They represented the dead weight which every museum struggles along with as part of its permanent collection, but which in the present case had been relegated to the cellars.

In Jante it was the opinion of the museum guards that counted, theirs and theirs only. Beautiful or ugly, these were established values long before the creation of any beautiful or ugly thing. Red hair? The ugliest hair in the world! A foregone conclusion even before one has had a chance to observe it! The lighter shades are charming. But gray hair is repulsive, under all circumstances, without exception. Curly hair is so utterly captivating that it causes the heart to flutter with ecstasy. All curly-headed persons realize this and therefore go about looking even more like sheep than was nature’s original intention. Curls always crown a stiff and stony stare in Jante — a curly-headed exhibitionism, mainly compensation. My son had curls to begin with, but we have since had them straightened out in order that he may not turn into a prize sheep.

A face which is expressive is a witness and a disgrace. It was also asserted by the museum guards that the sculptors of antiquity, though they undoubtedly had had talent, had not been gifted by God with anything resembling taste. They had never failed to select the ugliest heads they could find as models, though this quite possibly rose from the fact that these loathsome Caesars had, of course, had money and had been able to pay well for their portraits. That lay within their power. And damned if they had not been a pack of ugly brutes, whether their names had been Caesar, Caligula, or Augustus! Even so, there were heads in stone which had cost a sufficient amount of money to call forth admiration, in spite of the horrid impression they created. And we might well have heard the same thing in Jante — how handsome he was, some loathsome pig with a fortune.

Today the sting has, of course, been forgotten, but little else has had

the significance that this problem of aesthetics once had for me. It was inconceivable to me how I should ever manage to go through life with such a head as I had on my shoulders. I clearly recall my dreams of becoming thin, so thin, in fact, that the like had never before been seen on earth. I should drag myself along, painfully and half-dead, swinging limply between two crutches, but thin — yes, no one should be able to deny that I was thin, frightfully thin. I see myself as I wished I might be: a seedy looking man with wasted muscles and a head like the plucked head of a bird, a tiny little pointed, bony head. That such a picture could hardly have passed as beautiful, either, was of little consequence to me — as a matter of fact, I never gave it a thought. No one should ever be able to call me thick-headed again. It was the story all over again of Wizard and Muttonhead.

I left home when I was fifteen and for a time I was in a position to control my diet myself. At last I was free to realize my plans. Now Jante should see a gentleman who was really thin! I did not behave in the manner of other fat people who go about and, with terrific emphasis, keep reiterating the old refrain that so true as they're alive they really eat little or nothing. I did not utter a murmur. I am no fellow to do things by halves. I simply ceased to eat.

The affair was not quite so simple as that, for I had, of course, fought energetically to make myself believe that I was really not fat at all, and this belief I refused to give up. So the reason I offered myself was that, by not eating, I should be able to save money with which to buy profound books. Much else must also have crept in, for I was afflicted with definite feelings of inferiority which led unfailingly to dreams of suicide. Thus, by not eating I was effecting at the same time both an attempt on my own life and an attempt to make myself beautiful. I reconciled the two ideas by considering what a handsome corpse I would make.

Meanwhile it was certain the girls would turn round to look at me on my return home to Jante, for it was evident that my enormous thick head was the real reason why they felt no interest in me, refused to talk with me or even tolerate me. Ah, but I had never put them to the test and so could not be sure whether they detested me or not. I really believe they did, however, to such a degree that,

God be praised, I was never led to tie myself down to any of them. Certainly it is not they that I care anything about today.

After fasting for several days, I was obliged to admit against my will that the human being must have food, especially when he has work to perform. And I was hard at work. How hard not even I myself was fully aware; my only yardstick was one I had brought with me from Jante and therefore I reckoned in only my regular working hours. Reading and writing were not looked upon as work in Jante and I still do not consider them really as such; partly because I cannot throw off entirely the influence of ancient dicta and partly because Jante is, to a certain extent, correct in its view. It is a hard life to be a labourer and the same intensity of thought is required of him as of the inventor, though the thoughts of these two types of mind differ greatly in quality. The smooth combustion which the thought-process involves in the brain can best be maintained with at least a semi-annual beef-steak.

But when one occupies the day with physical labour and the night with the profundities, the profundities; too, take their toll in the way of exhaustion. I read the Bible because I had taken it into my head that something of importance must be contained within its covers. I became so versed in Scripture that I have caused even several of Jante's pious ones to sit up and take notice. In the pages of my diary I would compose serious treatises on ethical problems. They were so penetrating that I shall never again through all eternity be able to take logic seriously. I was out hunting, you understand. I was searching for something. I was all wound up in something and I was not aware of it. I was seeking something and I did not know what. I borrowed from a library a ponderous tome on insects, and this I studied in deep secrecy. It was heavy, concentrated material, but I worked my way methodically through its many hundred pages. And what did I do after that? I bought paper and copied off the entire book! In the evening the learned man would sit alone by lamplight and write in beautiful longhand — ten, twenty pages each evening. Why? Ask the man in the moon. I completed the job and for a long time lugged that monstrous manuscript around with me. It was my pride and my bitter disgrace. Half-mad with worry and dread, were the thought to occur to me that I had left the sheets lying about where someone might see

them, I would race home. My spiritual life, my eroticism, and my fasting were state secrets of vast importance. I saved money, bought books, practiced “celibacy,” and drank water to appease my stomach.

As I said before, I was not able to carry out a complete fast, though I did manage to live from New Year’s until the first of April on six crowns twenty. I kept a cash account and it is apparent from an examination of my entries that the saving of money was my prime motive. First and fore-most, under each day’s heading, is noted down the signally small amount of food I consumed: A thin half-slice of bread. A medium-sized potato.

But after three months had passed, poor chap, I had failed to reduce! That is, I had lost half my old weight and had only a thin layer of dry skin left to cover my bones. But a cranium simply cannot be pared down by fasting.

My head was just as large as ever it had been before. Though I had become uglier than ever, I retained that old head of mine! I looked at myself in the glass and realized to my sorrow that my head, if anything, had become even larger. It appeared to be twice its former size, crowning, as it did, a body whose state of emaciation was appalling. Most of all I resembled a foetus.

I looked tearfully at those splendid books of mine and decided I had had enough of them. And, with that, all my possibilities of ever becoming a bibliophile fell to ruin. What good are books to a man if he cannot be quit of his head?

In despair I devoured a loaf of brown bread. Absolutely never has anything tasted so good to me as that bread, although it was wet with the tears of defeat and remorse. Like a horse, I munched steadily at the loaf until it was gone; afterwards I collapsed to the floor and squealed like a stuck pig. Fate had delivered its blow and the world’s one and only swine lay writhing in agony too horrible to endure. It was like having swallowed a glowing coal. Help arrived and I was assisted into bed, where I continued my screaming. After having become accustomed to lean rations my stomach had suddenly and without warning been given a whole loaf of brown bread. The doctor poured medicine into me and I

continued to scream; after that when, by experiment, he poured a different concoction into me, I bellowed like a gelded dinosaur. They poured medicine and food and good advice into me until I drowned out my own yells. Eight days later I was up and around again, and it was a miracle which stood at variance with the doctor's intentions. Not a word did I breathe about what had led up to my attack. This I kept a dark secret.

My earlier account of this episode in my life was given a quite different point of view. There was a time when appeared as the story of a boy who, having gone forth into the world, was forced to live so frugally that he broke down in health because of it. He worked twenty hours a day and allowed himself no rest, but he was a model for mankind. I see by your face that you suddenly recognize the story. Ah yes, it is an old story with many variations. Note well that the teacher's eyes fill with tears when he tells about the boy's food, which occupies three-quarters of the space in both the book and the teacher's mouth. There was so little of it! A medium-sized potato, perhaps with a dash of salt, but that was most often for Sunday dinner. I really know something not only about zoologists, but also about bibliophiles and starving artists.

I feel so free from affairs of this nature now that I am quite able to laugh at them. There are few persons, however, who dare look at them to laugh. And afterwards they lie like stones in their hearts.

# THE SUICIDE

TWICE I have committed suicide, the second time by poison and in all seriousness. The net result was twenty-four hours of slumber and a great sense of pride upon waking to discover that more than that would be required to relieve me of my life. This was once when I had really given up trying to struggle on further.

The first attempt was more in the nature of a dress-rehearsal. I was perhaps eleven years old when I was seized by a grand desire to see myself as a corpse, or rather to be seen as such. Present, too, was the usual suicide motive: Revenge! One kills oneself that others may weep bitter tears and be shaken with remorse, as will only serve

them right!

An oak tree stood in our yard and beneath this I made all arrangements to shuffle off my mortal coil. In the semi-gloom of early evening I fastened a noose to one of the lower limbs and, in concealment, waited for someone to come.

The first to pass my way were two seven-year-old children. I had time, before they spied me, to stand on tiptoe and thrust my head into the noose. Just as they came abreast, I stuck out my tongue, grimaced horribly, and was actually on the point of choking.

The youngsters halted and stared at me. They did not utter a sound. The situation lasted perhaps a minute. Their faces gleamed white in the darkness. Although I was but half-conscious I was enjoying my discomfort enormously. At length they withdrew a few paces and immediately took to their heels. Then I rescued my head from the noose and got rid of the rope.

It is not comforting to know that one has resorted to such measures, the reason being that one's present judgment is based upon the suppositions of the present rather than upon those of the past. One does not recall facts in their true light. It had not been my aim to frighten anyone. I had sought rather the voluptuous experience of death by hanging. Since no one else loved me, I had fallen in love with myself. When the world becomes too offensive and we are alone and everyone seems against us, our fancy dwells on the noose. There is something of magic associated with hanging, a magic not easily explained. Our eminent society commits, with the law in one hand, the bizarre act of hanging people up in the air.

I have often wondered whether I did not kill a man for the mere sake of hanging for it, for the risk of being hanged. There is no conclusive evidence for belief that one is at a disadvantage on the scaffold, or on the cross.

# MORALITY AND TERROR

PEOPLE of ripe age teach us the difference between good and evil, so they imagine. What they do impress upon us is, in fact,

something totally different: They avenge their own childhood upon us.

Early in life we develop within ourselves a sense of caution. It is impossible for us to know when our elders will find occasion to assault us. We go about in a perpetual state of dread of everything new. In school the teacher flies at us for failing to ask questions, the reason being that, in educational conferences, he is continually holding forth to the effect that children have inquisitive minds. But the teacher forgets what it is the child desires to inquire about. He imagines in all seriousness that a child can be interested in knowing the exact population of Liberia. The child soon learns from experience that a question in class may lead to almost anything. It may involve a thing or two which his teachers have set up in their minds as dangerous subjects. And what these subjects may be, it is impossible to know beforehand; they may be elucidated, for example, by no more than an unexpected verbal assault and a subsequent rain of blows. Come now, children, ask questions! No, thanks! We have all asked questions and soon discovered, to our dismay, what they lead to. Moreover, children are much too wise to put questions to a teacher who begs for them. They know that he is even more dangerous than the others.

The foundations of our timidity were laid back in the days when we were wary of anything that smacked of novelty, incapable as we were of knowing whether it would lead to commendation or a good sound thrashing. This spirit of indecisiveness sticks pins in us throughout our lives every time we are confronted by a new situation which may quite possibly resolve in some frightful mistake. Timidity is teacher-fright.

Daily we encounter this form of dread: in the newspapers, in politics, everywhere. People are prone to approach a new problem in a panic of emotion. They believe they vary according to personal opinion, whereas they actually differ according to their individual form of dread. On the eve of any election the terror stalks through the streets with its shiny skull agape. Show me a man in power who cannot bring himself to pin his faith to the judgment of his constituents, proceeding instead along lines which seem vague and meaningless and uncontrollable as the basis of his administration,

and I'll show you a man who is honestly seeking to unearth the causes of social misery by his acts.

We operate entirely on the basis of fear. When I was a child, constantly bobbing up in the press were certain lachrymose broodings on the subject of overpopulation. In no more than a century there would hardly be any room left for anyone! Later on, the journalistic tears flowed from a different spout. It was only a few years ago that the same press was full to overflowing with long-drawn-out discussions of how things would end now that no one cared to have children any longer — there was a general mobilization of sociologists, clergymen, and God Himself to trumpet the doctrine that people now had something pretty serious to think about!

But when the Deluge set in in 1929, we promptly dismissed sociologist, clergyman, and God and again began babbling about over-population. Some have already found out that the trouble lies with the poorer classes for having brought forth too many young ones in the last generation. Not many care to be reminded of what they said on the subject of immoral refusal to have children in 1928. Morality has nothing to do with God, but a great deal to do with fear and mental constipation.

Among the taboos we encountered as children there were certain ones which decided the course of our lives. The child seeks the solution of life's riddle; he seeks with doubtful, furtive gaze and, discovering no immediate answer straight ahead, diverts his glance hurriedly in the direction of known taboos. It is there that something exists which the older generation desires to keep hidden! The old possess all truth and all explanation and insist upon keeping them hidden from the young. Thus the terror quickly teaches us to reason, and at once the seeds are sown for future thieves, forgers, and other felons. Early in life my awe of the drunkard became tempered with an unyielding delight at the thought of drinking. After I was confirmed and had myself donned the robes of maturity, I would one day hide myself away in the woods and drink myself more drunk than anyone I had ever seen. I revelled in the thought. My fantasies grew into day-long dreams filled with sentimental sorrow mingled with feelings of manliness. I

had heard my brother Petrus express his views on the subject: Alcohol was a menace, a hideous menace, and it ought to be removed. The well was to be sealed before the child should fall in and drown. He did not know and was unable to realize that propaganda for abstinence and actual prohibition placed the deepest well ever dug fair in the middle of the public way. On the other hand, one is likewise drawn to the conclusion that no one digs wells in the middle of the public way without having some personal interest at stake.

The agitation on the subject of prohibition makes children into drinkers; they await their chance and imbibe. I believe that during the two years after my confirmation I drank greater quantities of alcohol than in the course of the next ten years, though I was not exactly an abstainer even then. Either I have an iron constitution or the better part of the agitation is a lie. I believe it is the latter. The drinker breaks down beneath the consciousness of sin rather than under the effects of alcohol. The law of positive reaction was likewise strongly realized there in Jante for we knew only too well that it was the abstainers and the pious ones who had dishonest children. Theirs were children who, being confronted by a greater than average terror, made a greater than average detour.

# ADAMSEN'S BARN

AT home we had one ban in particular which, in my early years, was as dark and menacing as the one against alcohol. It was this: Thou shalt not pass through Adamsen's gate.

I sense the dark shadow of it to this very day and am quite often awakened in the night by some bad dream about Adamsen's barn. Adamsen was a large impressive fellow who early reminded me of Christian IV, although not the least true likeness existed. He was as incalculable as a shepherd dog, gentle as a dove, and fierce as a bear. His mastery of words was that of an Eigill Skallagrimsson. Adamsen was a figure generally feared. We knew but one man who dared stand his ground against him, and that was the farmer Roland.

We were also afraid of Roland, though he resembled Adamsen only in his command of language — the two men enjoyed in common a brutal and telling sense of humor. Roland was generally unpopular; his tongue was too sharp and seldom did he expose himself in any way that would give anyone an opportunity to get back at him. The initiate knew, however, that Roland's word was as good as his bond. Father never forgot that Roland had once lent him a helping hand; it was only a matter of ten crowns, but Father's weekly pay was nine, so, relatively, it was a fair amount, after all. Father paid back the loan on the day agreed upon, and, ever after, there existed a mild friendship between the two. They would pause in the street for a chat now and then, but beyond that they were in no way intimate. Behind Roland's cold exterior lay hidden the soul of an idealist. This was far from true of Adamsen, Roland was a total abstainer. Adamsen drank. Not every day, but on occasion. This played havoc with his reputation in Jante, where we recognized only the absolute. Our minds recognized only abstainers and drunkards.

As a child I long believed that, in this direction at least, values were definitely established. In the throes of eternal doubt and uncertainty, I grew to insist upon the definite line of demarcation drawn by alcohol. This line separated good from evil. The evil ones drank. The virtuous ones belonged to the temperance society. I seized upon this conclusion and held fast to it. It was, after all, a kind of fixed point in a shifting world of doubt. Childish? Yes, but countless adults believed and still believe the same: The millennium will be at hand when alcohol has been destroyed. This constitutes almost a religion.

Then, one day, as Father stood chatting with a group of men by the wayside, I heard several harsh words uttered in reference to Roland. He often gave cause for criticism.

Suddenly I became alarmed. What were they saying about Roland? Was he not a good man? Was he unscrupulous?

Something flew to pieces in my mind. Could one abstainer believe that another abstainer was not good? That was impossible! What did they mean?

I brooded over the matter for some time and at length found myself compelled to mention my problem to Father: “Tell me, Father, is it all a lie that Roland is an abstainer?”

Father looked at me with wonder. “Has anyone said that?” he asked. No, no one had said it. Then what did I mean by my question?

I was unable to find a reply. I was filled with a panic of doubt. It is childhood experiences of this order which the theologians project on the screen of heaven as material for mental struggle. For within it dwelt another horrible thought: Was it possible that it was Father who was evil, in thus speaking ill of an abstainer? Was God not good?

Adamsen’s mother had hanged herself. The mother of Roland had lived to be very old; she had been bedridden, but unable to die. At length she had requested old Roland to light a fire under her bed. That had been accomplished by means of a little tuft of straw. I regard this practice in the light of symbolical witchburning, though I may be wrong. Whatever it represented, the old people were as ignorant as I. They said that when an old person lay thus between life and death, it was because neither the Lord nor the Devil was willing to have the soul, but when a fire was made under the bed the opposing powers were forced to come to a decision. Roland’s father made a fire under his wife’s bed and shortly afterwards the old woman died.

This happened before my time; it was a matter of parish history when I was a child. But one day Roland and Adamsen met in the street and almost came to blows. Roland’s hoarse shouts sounded far and wide and people stood peeping through doors open a crack. Adamsen had a mild’ ingratiating voice — oh, so mild! And Adamsen had poise his questions were naught if not friendly! Roland dished out plain truths which were anything but polish a’spitting as he spoke. Adamsen smiled. Possibly lacked effective material; he resorted to ungallant references to Adamsen’s forbears. This he did because Adamsen had a religion embracing the theory of transmigration of souls. At length Roland suddenly voiced the opinion that Adamsen was descended from jackasses.

Adamsen smiled. What, then, was Roland's opinion on the subject of his own forbears, he inquired.

Adamsen could leave his forbears out of it, Roland thundered.

"How was it with that mother of yours?" Adamsen asked sweetly. "She had to have fire under her bed, did she not?"

"And yours!" Roland bellowed — "She had to have a rope around her neck, she did!"

Adamsen grinned. He had the Devil's own face hidden beneath that smile of his, as anyone could see. He looked around, but the road was deserted. Not a face in any window. No, people were far too wise to show themselves. Whereupon Adamsen took another long look at Roland and walked away.

One day Adamsen was sitting in an ale-house bumping glasses with one of his own kind, the fanner Sölve. The latter had a reputation similar to Adamsen's. As the day wore on and whisky had made them fit for almost anything, Adamsen went out into the kitchen to convince the girls. Sölve followed him out and was equally convincing. Soon a debate arose between the two men as to which was the more convincing, the debate degenerating into a wrangle and the wrangle into a bout. They rolled about on the kitchen floor amid a bedlam of screaming femininity and at length Sölve managed to fasten his teeth upon Adamsen's thumb. He bit clean down to the bone. But then he himself suddenly received a bite in a place where there was no bone to resist Adamsen's teeth. Howling, they parted. For several months Sölve lay in bed and was sore as it says in the First Book of Moses, thirty-fourth chapter, twenty-fifth verse.

Thou shalt not pass through Adamsen's gate! How gruesome the sound of those words! I have given this matter much thought, but, in the main, an impenetrable gloom still enshrouds the whole problem. Often I feel that it was not so much the injunction itself I feared, but rather something obscure and forgotten which had once taken place inside Adamsen's barn. All children had free access to Adamsen's property and no one ever received a harsh word from him, no matter what we might have hit upon to do. The boys felt

grownup there on his farm and, with intelligent male expressions on their faces, they would perform the work of hauling manure, caring for the stock, driving the cattle out to pasture.

It was this that Father used as subterfuge: whenever we felt a desire to help someone, we could pitch in and help Mother. Adamsen could get along with his farming operations by himself; a dangerous force lay behind Father's words as he uttered them. They accomplished nothing, however, since we found more fun helping others. It is possible that Father was conscious of but the one reason he gave, but that alone could not have made his injunction seem so fateful. Somewhere within my soul I sense that at this point I am near one of the great main highways of life... but each time I believe myself to be standing with both feet upon it, ready to follow it whither it leads... it melts away and is gone. No, here I have grounded on the rock of the inexplicable. The aptest expression I can find for it does not go very far, though to me it seems freighted with fateful significance:

*As a child I came away from Adamsen's barn. Since then I have been locked out. But for five-and-twenty years I have been on a journey back to it, back to Adamsen's barn.*

Yes, thus do I express it. To you it means little, can never mean more. Nor does it mean very much to me, either; only that it gives voice to a vast, wild emotion, as though the whole barn were afire, as though Jante itself were in flames, the whole town, the walls collapsing in billows of smoke and sparks and lime dust. The ruination of Jante! And at the same time something quite different, quite the opposite. It is the Book of Revelation.

But, you see, all this is joy. But joy so vast and so wild that the child has hidden himself away in tears. We cannot look into the lightning, for if we did, we should see into heaven and become blind.

In the wall about Adamsen's farm reposed the holy stone. And this I must tell you now, though it be but Greek to you — I was filled with holy dread and could not say it at the time I was speaking of the stone. Now it is possible for me to say it because I have looked into the flame encompassing the barn. I saw an inscription once —

saw it? Yes, I know no better way of putting it than that I saw it: It blazed in cryptic fire in a semicircle above the holy stone, and smoke arose from the inscription: “thou shalt not enter thy father’s house.”

I stand peering into the semi-gloom inside the barn. Creeping like worms, we made our way thence... into my father’s barn. Yes, I am proceeding along the edge of something, I know not what. My father had no barn.

I have become another person. The fugitive has turned and will cross his tracks. But he cannot make his way through the flames in Adamsen’s barn.

Years have passed. Far away in time and space Jante lies. But the barn is very near and it is filled to the roof with fire. I steal in the direction of Adamsen’s barn once again as then I did almost daily, creep like a rat toward Adamsen’s barn, where the child prayed to Astarte.

But I am an exile who must now be content to examine old tracks in the earth outside Adamsen’s barn.

In Roland’s barn all was pleasant and clean. It was not swarming with youngsters there. In Adamsen’s barn. Agnes and I had a cave in the hay. We had apples stored in the hay. It was fine to have the forbidden fruit in the forbidden house. There was a dim light in that cave of ours; we had plaited a little lattice, a sort of Venetian blind of hay, so that we could see down onto the barn floor and know what was happening there and who was in the barn. Round about us there was a rustling of mice. Crawling about on the beams, the weasel was the evil spirit of the place...

Ours was joy supreme.

For several years there was a current belief that Adamsen might die almost any day. He had fallen away and was suffering from several ailments. But Adamsen went on living and the sense of insecurity surrounding him increased. He had grown to be more dangerous in his old age and quite unexpectedly he might take it into his head to settle some ancient grudge. Once, in a certain matter, he even took

revenge after a delay of thirty years. When Adamsen came walking down the street, grown folk would disappear in convenient doorways. They did not care to remind him of their existence. That was a hard-handed method of going back to childhood. Adamsen left things clean behind him. He had loved the strife, and now that he stood on the brink of death he probably realized how he had been tricked. The conflict had given him experience, it had taught him that Jante yields the sceptre to him who dares strike out and who merely smiles when someone says: “Maybe you don’t think I know something about you?” In such a case Jante itself takes fright and is forced unexpectedly to add: “What does one know in truth?” One becomes afraid. For if one knows nothing, then one believes that an Adamsen is dangerous.

Now perhaps he went about kicking himself: a conqueror too late.

Jante came to the joint conclusion that Adamsen was unable to die. But when this legend had gained general belief, his life flowed out of him. One morning the rumour spread over a skeptical town that at last Adamsen was dead.

But we had, actually to see it in print in the evening paper before we would fully believe it. I felt badly over his going and I am sure that there were many that day who shared my sorrow. We had supposed that his end would come as a relief. But in reality it seemed as though a corner of the universe had collapsed. To this very day I am unable to believe that Adamsen is really dead…

I see in my childhood environment the basic elements of a religion rooted in terror. In Adamsen’s barn all these were concentrated; ecstasy and horror were the flames which rose to meet the sky, Adamsen’s barn being in itself the point of contact between heaven and hell. And the lords of these twin kingdoms were united in Adamsen himself. He was the lord of the barn. He was God and he was Lucifer, and the holy stone lay fixed in the wall of both heaven and hell. When I wept because the abstainer Roland was not free from imperfection, it was because I then realized that he was not God in all His goodness. And then it was that Adamsen stretched forth from hell his grisly hand and occupied heaven, which had no ruler.

Something of importance has eluded me. Were it possible for me to penetrate the flames in Adamsen's barn, I should be able to lay before you the deepest root of what came to pass in Misery Harbour. Now I may only tell you What it is. I cannot prove my words, but I shall insist upon them none the less, for they chime within me like truth itself. Might I pierce that wall of flame, I should return to you omniscient.

Heaven and hell, those are the frontiers of terrorism, with a person's childhood poised between them. There you have Jesusism and Paulinism, individually and collectively.

I shall not penetrate the flames. But all I have told you thus far, and all I shall tell you later, is not intended to lay stone back upon stone and, in the end, restore Adamsen's barn. For I have a key to locked closets which together are Adamsen's barn. And I have been so close to the flames that the hair has been singed from my face, and it was then that I saw something therein. That happened the last time I stood face to face with John Wakefield in Misery Harbour and he pressed me to the point where chains melted and fell away and all my devils were released, when the man's very being and all he said and did exuded: Maybe you don't think I know something about you? Then a blaze of living fire engulfed us, and Adamsen's barn was suddenly transported to Misery Harbour.

In that moment I was given to see that terror is pitted against terror to the point that each gasp for air we give is the slave of terrorism. And I am determined to live without terror.

# SIN AND ATONEMENT

I SEE before me a mound of earth; always before, it has been as solid rock, but now a spring flows from it and the spring speaks intimately. There by the spring I sit and will have nothing to do with all those who howl and shoot, who scream as they dance about Phallos, and all those who purchase their opinions on the Rialto and who believe that what they know about themselves is something they know about others.

If only a murder case could be seen through to a logical finish — this has never happened and can never happen —and each and every link in the chain could be carefully established, it would be evident that the man to be hanged for murder is always another than the murderer. For he, too, kills himself; he is a suicide gone astray. The one who ought to have gone to the gallows, if anyone should be sent there, is perhaps the victim himself, but it may also be true that his murderers are so numerous that only the one who craves punishment should be taken away and hanged.

Along the road to maturity, where all is raw and unfinished, devils roam which later will congeal into stone in the wall. They do not congeal before their time, but grown persons issue orders which are in direct conflict with the laws of nature, with the result that the child catches sight of his own devils and keeps them alive by staring at them. Growth is the welding into place of each successive stage of development, which taken all together comprise the person of today. If we detest this individual, it is because we are blind and because we ourselves have not developed organically under pressure of terror. The human being is constructed of “original sin.” There exists no other material. The only doctrine of atonement worthy of consideration is that which makes it permissible for each stage of development to atone for itself in peace without interference from sadists and vandals.

The human being is a pyramid. Organic growth tapers upward to a final result.

In truth, it is this one believes: that the pyramid was a pyramid with the laying of the first stone. But it was not.

The Pharaohs had opportunity to observe many singular irregularities in the course of construction while their slaves were dragging stone blocks.

# BOURGEOIS AND PROLETARIAN

ONLY today you indicated that I have spoken all too little of money. Your thought was that economic problems must certainly exert a strong influence upon the child in an environment where money is scarce.

You are not the only one to hold this view. It seems so pleasantly obvious.

But it is a crude and vulgar error and often it is formulated as follows: The poor get no time to concern themselves with those problems which often prove troublesome to the children of the middle class. The poor must fight for bread and think primarily of this.

No time! I have told you enough for you to see why I cannot help laughing in my sleeve at this point of view. What the poor never have sufficient time and opportunity for is independence.

Money is the poor child's last consideration. His struggles take place on a deeper and a more primitive level. He demands power directly, without the periphrasis of money.

Money, in his eyes, is nothing to be fought for. Money is what one gets from the lords of the upper class if one shows up on time each morning and does what one is told. Or else one wins it in the lottery. Or a miracle happens. The worker has bright dreams of finding a heap of treasure. Or of an unexpected inheritance.

As a consequence, the deep despairing rage of the man without employment. He spends his entire time waiting in expectancy. Hatred wells up into his consciousness: The crooks higher up have betrayed him. They no longer give him the chance of showing up on the dot and of tramping the streets of Jante according to fixed schedule.

He gets no envelope containing money on Friday. He is being cheated.

He did not learn as a child that the struggle for power must be indirect. He desires that people shall like him and, because they like him, that they shall give him all he must have. This does not

happen. The lords of the upper crust will not part with their money unless he takes that damnable walk daily on the minute to the factory.

Well, he complies. But then may strike the catastrophe we find ourselves in the midst of today: the factory may close its doors. Then what? He is out of work. No more money in an envelope on Fridays. Now he is unemployed! I believe that he has an inalienable right to his work. Whole armies of Jante people have been produced and places must be found for them. The system demands it, for with an educational method which has deprived hundreds of thousands of their mentality, these hundreds of thousands now find themselves in a situation they cannot escape without brain-power.

The proletarian, according to latter-day prophets, has no time for sexuality. But if the burgher has lacked time to devote to any but modest fancies, as modern psychologists would have us believe, he has at least had time for considerably less than the proletarian. It is likewise evident to me that a feeble and indirect sex upheaval in childhood presupposes an excellent economic future: namely, that of the burgher. He has been economical all his days. On the other hand, a wild uncontrollable surge of sex during childhood years leads to economic imbecility: the proletarian.

The children of the working class are *down* and nothing will be otherwise so long as they remain down, born and bred in the underworld.

When a society faces reorganization along radical lines, the first storm-signals will always come from the deserters from the party yielding ground. It has never been slaves who have begun successful struggles against slavery; the deserters from the feudal state were the individuals who a hundred and fifty years ago, laid the ideological foundation for the middle-class revolt. From Marx down to the present day the working-class movements have always taken their ideology from middle-class deserters. It will always hold true that the under class will not be stirred into action until after the best minds within the upper class have perceived that the latter is no longer able to manage its own tasks. With the first signs of such weakness, the superseding class rises like a tidal wave. A society erected upon a class system falls when its structure has been

analysed and become understood. The middleclass social democrats wished to develop into a bourgeois state; now they have paid in blood for their lack of vision.

Karl Marx hauled the whole of society beneath his scrutinizing gaze. Freud was content with the middle-class individual, and the rather, droll result of that was the revelation to many who are involved in the labour movement that such a four-letter man as the burgher is in reality no proletarian. But it appears to me that humanity has wasted sufficient time on revelations. Every attempt to introduce unknown quantities in and irrational claims for the new day, which was bound to come anyway, ought, I feel, to be nipped in the bud.

Money does not signify so much to the poor child as one might imagine. Or, more aptly stated: Money signifies something other than we believe. It is not, for the child of the proletariat, the symbol of power. The business man knows that money is perfectly useless sealed tip in the vaults of a bank. The proletarian believes in the gold standard until it is too late. The sex struggle has beer too direct. The struggle for power has been too primitive and artless; we are not apes any longer. When all our defeats are suffered on a battlefield which belongs back the stone age, we have no strength left. Then begins the rhythmic beat of wooden shoes in the street, the men of Dante on their way to the factory.

This is a practical arrangement for the ones in power, and human ruination for the remainder of society. Some day we shall elevate human beings above the system and create conditions which have been analysed beforehand.

Certain modern psychologists have discovered, via Freud, that the proletarian does not share the bourgeois' s strong interest in matters pertaining to sex. For, lacking funds, money is to him a far greater consideration than it is to the bourgeois who has a bank account. It is rather strange that one chooses to gather one's proofs from the negative side of a matter. The fact that the bourgeois is in possession of money indicates that he has earned it and that he will earn more. This presupposes no small amount of thought devoted to problems of business. It should then be as clear as day that the proletarian's thought is directed elsewhere. And it appears to me that one makes oneself ridiculous by confessing that Freud's

unmaskings of the bourgeois' s sexual life make the cold shivers run up and down one's spine. They are, in fact, but the highly modest impressions of a clergyman's widow.

For the proletarian money does not exist, either in his pocket or in his soul. He has never gone far enough to find that power could be purchased. He wishes simply to have power confided to him. Consider the Roman Catholic Church, which is an excellent construction; it has incorporated all points: It had the keys placed in its care by Saint Peter and with them opened the treasure vault. There is something for every taste. Grace for him who has no money and good deeds for the others, the key alternating between heaven's gateway and Standard Oil. In the Catholic clergy you will find at the top the greatest Psychologists who have ever lived, and at the bottom a flock of sheep. Something to satisfy everyone's need. Therefore Catholicism's hard-headed opposition to every change in the established order. The Vatican stands or falls on a literal understanding of original sin. The day we make our children a present of the apple which they will in any event steal, the Catholic Church will fall, it will, up until the very last, demand child sacrifice, eternal provocation for apple-stealing.

It is not by accident that I have talked myself around to the question of religion. I brought out this point about money because it is significant in regard to what I shall have to say concerning the religion of Jante. All religion is preached by the agents of power in whatever locality it is found, and is, if anything, a hallucinatory portrait of power. A study of Jante's religion reveals the fact that in it Phallos is closer to conscious thought than Mammon.

# THE POWER AND THE GLORY

I SHALL not waste many words on churchly persuasions which indicate, if anything, that the more sects there are in existence, the more need there is for leaders. Youthful aspirants will always give preference to that denomination which has the weakest leaders, or they will found a new one themselves. I shall look at religion from a quite different point of view. The entire collection of dogmas and Augsburg Confessions — let the old and the wise wrangle over them

to their hearts' content up in their higher realms of thought. I shall return home to the world of the child and look at things from there, without regard for what particular sect or religion this or that private individual imagines he belongs to shall look upon religion as it is looked upon by children.

That it was all in all a question of power we discovered very early in life. Not that the words "power" and "glory" played anything of a prominent part; it was only that coercion was in the air. When some zealot stood up to testify for Christ, he might, through opposition or the fear of opposition, throw precisely the same fit of hysterics a certain person once threw when he discovered that I doubted the existence of the bogy man: "You'll get a licking!" ... As a child I could not understand how they could wax so angry; the opposition was destined for hell anyway, so it was a shame to scold him, into the bargain. Once over the coffee cups at a meeting of the foreign mission society, after a discussion had revealed that certain persons had been angered by a funeral oration delivered by the minister, the clergyman's wife at length raised her voice: "It does no good for people to growl. After all, we can't allow every Tom, Dick, and Harry to enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Tall Dorthe well knew that here again it was a question of power. She was a tall and sallow fence-post with a permanent sneer on her face. Whenever there was an election of parish officers, she would make a statistical record of the votes and would later issue a report as to the percentage of Jante's population casting votes for the Devil. This you must not regard as meant in any symbolical sense; she meant what she said literally: one voted either for God or for the Devil. That was a natural consequence of Jante's fear of everything out of the ordinary. Even the spirits were hauled down to the level of Jante's gaze.

# THEY TOOK THE HOLY INTO THEIR MOUTHS

ONE day I was standing in the middle of the road with Latterfrosken. He was six or seven years older than I. Upon reaching

maturity he took excessively to drink, and his stupidity knew no bounds. He resembled a frog; his eyes stood out like twin plums, he had little or no forehead, his cranium slanting sharply back from his eyebrows. His mouth was enormous and without lips. When drunk, he would strike his elders.

It was, of course, gratifying to me that this adult lad was willing to associate with me. It was an established tendency on the part of both Latterfrosken and his brothers to seek the company of younger boys. One of them was deaf and dumb, but we always understood what he meant whenever he emitted one of those deepthroated growls of his. His head was as small as the head I had always desired for myself. A third was cross-eyed; he left home for America armed with a yard-long dagger his father had made from an old file, to slay Indians with. No one has heard to this day what ever became of the Indian-killer.

My feelings of friendship for Latterfrosken were deeply tinged with shame, due to the fact that he was an object of public scorn, but, even so, I was unable to let him go. Moreover, directly after confirmation he and similar dregs of society were the only friends I had. Though they were imbeciles whom no one else would have as associates, I accepted them as adults of a sort who at last had accorded me the recognition I had lacked following the farce of confirmation. Latterfrosken persuaded me that he was a fellow of countless intrigues, all involving the daughters of prominent citizens. Pitiful boasts! Yet I was credulous and allowed myself to be impressed. His attitude toward such girls would unfailingly be offhand and, poor chap, it would always be their way to come crawling to him in tears in the vain hope of being taken back when he would fain be through with them. Each in turn had proposed to him, but at that Latterfrosken had become seriously provoked: “Do you think I’d marry you, you dummy?” And that took care of *that*! He gives one cause to ponder the question of race hygiene.

But I was speaking of the time when, as a child of twelve, I was standing in the road beside him... Suddenly we heard strange sounds from the house where Jens Hansen lived. We stole closer. Someone was sniffling inside. After a moment someone cried out half-aloud: “Oh, no, in the name of Jesus!”

We could not resist approaching the window and peering inside. On the sofa lay Tall Dorthe and Fru Hansen in an embrace; they were wriggling both arms and legs, meanwhile sobbing and calling upon Jesus. With that, Latterfrosken had to be funny: he rapped thunderously on the window-pane. A shriek, a thump on the floor, and we dashed off like two rabbits.

It was then that something went wrong with my normal attitude toward Jesus, and later when His emissaries would put to me their set question: "How do you stand with Jesus?" I would always have to bite my tongue to keep from replying: "I feel sorry for Him."

For that was how I felt. I was not clear in my mind at the time as to precisely what I had witnessed, though we reported the incident far and wide and had no end of fun over it. Nevertheless, I did have pity in my heart for Jesus. And I always felt the same whenever Fröken Nibe would mention His name in school. I resented it that He should be anything to Tall Dorthe and Fröken Nibe. He Was no mere person of the opposite sex.

The very name has repelled me since. It was something which Tall Dorthe and Fröken Nibe had had in their mouths, something unchaste; there was something physical about it. And in the marketplace the Salvation Army would sing:

***Come to Jesus!***

***Come to Jesus!***

There stand all of Jante's crooked-legged, deaf, and cross-eyed population, all those with red noses and women with scrawny legs; there they all assemble each week in the marketplace to set up a vulgar commotion. They have managed to pull through life. Whenever we had nothing better to do, we would go down to the Salvation Army's revival meeting for the purpose of having ourselves ejected for bad behavior.

# UNENLIGHTENED PERSONS

OLE SMED'S wife saw the Devil in her kitchen one day; he thrust

his head out of the soot-hole in the chimney. And it was not so long after this that Jens Hansen's wife also received a visit from His Satanic Majesty, also in the kitchen, to be sure. She described his visit ecstatically as she stood on a box so that her head came above the board fence which separated the two back yards. The Evil One had stood there in one corner and was swinging his tail and it was singed and he was no larger than a six- or seven-year-old boy. Very likely she had not dared to look at him too closely. Otherwise, he had the usual zoological equipment, his full quota of living original sin, the legs of a goat, the hoofs of a horse, and a pair of curved horns. Sweat poured down over Fru Hansen's face as she continued her shrill description: "But then I put the cover on the kettle and answered and said: In the name of God the Father and of His holy Son Jesum Christurn! ' And with that he went away"

At home we had no end of fun over that abracadabra of hers, heathens that we were. Usually we would repeat it, standing on one leg. Always on sober occasions it had to be "Jesum Christum," just why I do not know; I am no philologist, nor was Jens Hansen's old woman, either.

But immediately after Mother and I had listened to Fru Hansen's shrill and hysterical account of her experience over the back fence, I felt very much at a loss and stole back into the house on Mother's heels. Inside, she suddenly vanished; she had withdrawn to the narrow confines of the pantry and closed the door behind her. I stood as still as a mouse and horribly ill at ease out in the middle of the room. Then from the pantry I heard a series of strange sounds which culminated in an uncontrollable burst of laughter. Mother had gone off by herself to have her laugh, realizing the impropriety of giving vent to mirth over anything which in any way concerned Jesus.

When Father heard the story in the evening, he looked at us with the trace of a smile on his face, but he said nothing. We understood from this that it was perfectly permissible to laugh a little again if only we did not go too far with it. Father did not say a word.

Otherwise, attempting to characterize such things in general, he said: "There are certain unenlightened persons."

This did not express it precisely. Father's use of the word implied, in the main, weak mental endowment, fading intellect, or something of the sort. Enlightenment In a banal sense was something he certainly lacked himself, but now that I may judge him in retrospect, I know that he was the wisest man I ever met as a child, and the gentlest.

You must forgive me for mentioning my father once again, but he is no irrelevant person now that we are on the subject of mythology.

People stood in awe of Father's wrath. I never saw him in a fit of anger, but when the emotion was on the point of welling up in him, he was able to repulse an adversary with a mere look. That much I have observed on many occasions. One day a panhandler came into the workshop, and it was always Father's practice to give such a fellow five öre. But this man was drunk, and Father said: "I don't help to buy a man whisky!" The man began storming at Father, but immediately he was treated to that look — no more than a focusing of the eyes and a movement of those bushy eyebrows — whereupon he tumbled backwards out through the door as though he had been given a shove. With those eyes of Father's riveted upon me I would not be worth a fig, but he would always catch himself when it happened to be one of us and would immediately soften his expression.

Per, Latterfrosken's father, was at work one day in the shop where Father had toiled for some forty years. At closing time it was the habit of the men to gather round a bucket of water and wash up there in the same suds. Per reached for the soap, but Father grasped it first and said: "You ought to realize by yourself that we don't care to wash in the same water with you."

Per had some disease of the skin which made one think of leprosy.

Per became furious. Was Father putting on airs? Do you think perhaps that you *are* something? Do you think for a moment that you are better than the rest of us?

Father finished washing without responding. But when he laid down the soap and Per began fingering for. Father, who was bending over the bucket, merely raised his face a trifle and *looked*. I

trembled to see it. But Per's hand sank to his side; he mumbled something incoherent and stepped away. Repelled and degraded, he found another bucket, outside the sacred circle of fraternal ablution.

This is not merely a reflection of my respect for my father. More than once I have heard it expressed by others, that it was best to be on one's way when Vilhelm Arnakke began *looking* at you.

# A REVELATION OF PURITY

A SINGULARLY beautiful experience I once had when a boy. A fair element of fear was involved in it, as well, however. For a long time I could not understand why I always recalled it in connection with Tall Dorthe and the wife of Jens Hansen. But I believe I understand it now.

I had been roaming about in the woods and at length I climbed a tree which stood at the edge of the woods, a short distance from the beach. It was a gorgeous day. For some time I sat there hidden among the foliage and gazed out across the world. Then I heard someone coming and sat as still as a mouse, for it was considered wicked to climb trees. It was a couple I knew, a machine-fitter named Alving and his sweetheart. They were both young, a little past twenty. Alving was of a far more refined type than the average worker in Jante and he was much admired by the girls. He was a fairly tall man, dark and slender, and he had a thin mustache. She resembled him enough to have been his sister; though she was short, she was likewise 'Inn, and her hair was as black as coal. Indeed, she was a beautiful girl. There was always something so friendly and genial about them both.

They walked down to the water's edge and, after taking off their shoes and stockings, waded out a little way. I can still hear her little squeals of delight and the deeper tones of his voice as they waded about in the water. Later they came up from the beach and found a place in the lyme-grass where they were completely hidden from view — save from above.

I remained perched where I was and studied a little bird, but at

length my back began to ache and I felt a strong desire to descend. But when I happened to look down at the couple again, it seemed as though my heart would stop beating…

I was paralyzed with fear and dared not make a move, for I was certain that Alving would kill me were he to discover my presence. Afterwards they lay for a long time exchanging kisses. When it occurred to me that they might continue lying there throughout the entire afternoon, I summoned all my courage and began creeping down the tree; I had no other choice, for my limbs were asleep and almost wholly without sensation. I proceeded cautiously, inch by inch down the tree to the ground, then I slowly retreated into the woods, step by step, until at length I broke into a run.

It created no stir when I detailed my experience to the boys. All, you see, had similar stories to tell, and I suppose I myself had already told of such things before. As time went on, I looked upon the machinist Alving with the gravest of reverence. Those two back there on the beach —to this day it seems to me that they presented the most beautiful picture I have ever seen. The lymegrass hid them as it nodded in the summer breeze and the fiord was a sparkle of blue.

But something of a feeling of nastiness was associate with it, none the less, probably because I was reminded that incident in connection with Tall Dorthe and I:, Hansen. It was, you understand, the perfect antithesis' Even though I had laughed at Tall Dorthe and Fru Hasen and had taken their affair as a huge joke, it had filled me nevertheless with no small degree of nausea. The joke repelled me, and I felt pity for Jesus, who had fallen in among thieves. Rising above that experience down by the beach was a tall clean vault of sky. Thus it should be. Butterflies fluttered their white wings as they dipped and spun through the air, always two by two; the ant was busy in the woods, and nature breathed her anthem of praise into the hearts of all living things. Into the very centre of nature's busy workshop stepped the boy who had gone astray in his development and had seen only those things which were abortive and misshapen.

# VIRGIN BIRTH

But it was not long before I began thinking that it was something else which young Alving and his sweetheart had done. Although, in one corner of my brain, I had of course realized only too well what lay at the bottom of the relationships between older people, I was compelled with another part of my brain, nevertheless, to deny what I knew — the very attitude of mind most adults assume regarding children. I did not believe my own eyes. I simply refused to believe that grown-ups went in for such things. Of course, I myself would do so upon attaining maturity, but — oh, heavens! I saw, I heard, and I knew. But I flatly denied the facts, only because I could not bear to think such things of my parents. Even now, at this late moment, there is something which seems to be trying to convince me that what took place at the beach was something other than it was, something innocent, in one way or another quite rational, an activity which older people engage, in, something useful… It is the child who still lives and denies: It must have been something else they did, something unfamiliar to me, but certainly not *that*!

To some extent it is perhaps the Jante man's literal mind that elevates the dogma of the virgin birth to a position of importance. A god must act directly if there is to be discussion of a divine son. But that side of the question I can lay aside. Profound theology is the adolescent stage preserved, the logical idiocy of defeat and impotency, which demands order in the genealogy of kings.

No doubt the deepest roots of the dogma of virgin birth lie buried in our natural demand for purity on the part of our parents. Persons who do not believe in the sexuality of the child are spoken of with little patience, but neither does the child believe in the sexuality of his elders. The child will very frequently demand a different explanation, even though he already correctly understands the facts. Here is a blending of cause and effect. If the child is not frightened at home, he is certain to be frightened elsewhere, most often in school. Moreover, one does not take into consideration the jealousy of the child in possession of the facts. His reaction is to regard his parents as sinners, since he is elsewhere given ample

basis for the belief that sexuality is a sin. But his parents *must not* be sinners. Therefore the child adjusts matters by denying that his parents ever do commit sinful acts.

Thus there must have been some mistake about young Alving, for his conduct, you see, at once made it seem plausible that grown-ups were like that, after all. Although, as a child, I could hardly be considered entirely naïve, I was, at any rate, quite up until my fourteenth year, sincere in my belief that my own parents were innocent of all deeds of this nature. My brothers and sisters and I were on the road to a fair presumption, of course, and frequently, with a sensation of pain, I would bring up the question of how many of us there were. *So* often, then, it had happened! How that all too large number pained me! And I was not long in so adjusting things in my mind that I was sure there had been but a *single* occasion.

You look at me! But down in Fairyland you will find the roots of all dogmas, even the most mysterious. Only because these roots are buried so deep are our hallucinations defended with such blind fury.

I was a zoologist. Early in my reading I learned of certain insects which, following a single act of fructification, are able to produce a tremendous number of offspring. This principle I extended to humanity.

Thus in the past there had been but a single act of fructification. This I circumvented as Israel circled the walls of Jericho. And so intensely did I hate even this isolated incident that at length I even disbelieved in it. I am no longer able to recall my exact process of adjustment. Never-the-less I was successful at last in eliminating even that once it had really never happened at all!

You may say that not all children are zoologists, and in that you may be correct, but it is quite beside the point. I know that the boys in Jante did not believe in the sexuality of their own particular parents and that they got along without zoology.

They had every reason in the world to believe the very opposite. Here you shall see the wish-dream which has crystallized into a

religious dogma: Mother gave birth to us, but Father had no part in it. One desires to be closer than anyone else to one's mother. No one must be granted a greater degree of intimacy. One exalts oneself to the position of father, but father exists already, so one goes a step higher and exalts oneself to the position of God the Father — and becomes one's own father. If you say that that is madness, I must, unfortunately, point to the Trinity. It is surely not madness on my part to mention what Christians have believed in for almost two thousand years!

God's Son, himself God, born of Mary, the wife of Joseph, whom we have placed in a position of doubtful honor. Oh yes, of course this is madness, but it is the type of madness given expression to in Fairyland — a madness which dwelt in the cranium of the founder of a certain religion who never liquidated the desires of His own Fairyland — exactly as little as do all others who believe in His word.

Our claim upon our parents we long ago decided to designate as the claim of purity. This was more delicate in its effect, and all personal egotism was enshrouded by the claim of purity for all. It is we little ones who yield to nasty capers. Where we make general application of the claim of purity, we stand face to face with asceticism. All children are founders of religion — as are adults in individual cases.

When we turn our minds to irreconcilable contradictions, our refuge is a theological mosaic where fact and its repudiation are elevated to a higher form of oneness, multiplied by three.

# WE DID NOT LIKE THE DEVOUT

JANTE's devout did not appeal to us, and the children of the devout were openly ashamed of their parents. Father said that the devout neglected their children and consistently cheated in business. Moreover, I believe he was right. The leaders in general piety were people actively engaged in trade, the flock otherwise consisting of the least skilled workers in town. The absolute dregs, of course,

were gobbled up by the Salvation Army.

There were exceptions. The painter Opsand was a heretic; his church had much in common with the Salvation Army. He was a huge, lumbering fellow, a hard worker and a highly respected citizen. His eldest daughter, whose name I never learned, was the object of my deepest affection when I was at the age of confirmation. Mine was humble love from afar. She never played in the street. Not because her parents kept a tight rein on her, at least not to all appearances. She was rather small, had blue eyes, black eyebrows, and black hair. Her expression was sober and serene.

But I dared not approach the one I adored. Moreover, no few others also admired her, for she was extremely pretty and her expression was not that of the average Jante girl. No one can ever understand how I loved her. Always it was she and I who had met that glorious summer day down by the beach, by no stretch of the imagination young Alving and his sweetheart. But I never came to know her name, for I never managed to speak to her and was afraid to ask anyone else.

And, on their side, the devout thought as little of us as we did of them. The wife of Ole Smed was forever hanging out of her window and screaming to her children that they were not to play with young heathens like us. We reported this at home. Father only smiled and said that the wife of Ole Smed was a silly goose. We all had an enormous respect for Ole Smed, who had something hanging down inside his trousers like a third leg. He sank deep in my estimation when I heard that this was only a truss.

# RICE PUDDING

IN addition to virgin birth, asceticism, and other strange matters, I likewise brought to light something relative to the sacrament. Obviously, I had never taken communion, but certain elucidations offered by Fröken Nibe, together with what the catechism had to say on the subject, proved more than enough to cause cold shivers to run up and down my spine…

Father loved rice pudding. We always had it on wash-day, for it was something which Mother could prepare a full day in advance. For me wash-day was a horrible ordeal, a day which gave me the sense of being somehow without a home. The whole house would be wildly disordered and, more often than not, there would be no fire in the parlour stove. Homesick and wretched, I would sit cowering in some corner.

So keenly did Father relish rice pudding that he would touch nothing else whenever a bowl of it appeared on the table. This bowl, however, would make wash-day for me tenfold more unpleasant than it already was, for I thoroughly loathed rice pudding. When forced to eat it, my gorge would rise and my eyes would brim with tears. My entire mouth would rebel — tongue, lips, teeth, all would recoil simultaneously from that awful sticky mass they were expected to endure. My blood would congeal to ice and my entire body would quake. There is nothing in all this world which could have caused me more pains of anguish to eat than did the very rice pudding which Father liked so well. It was the larger grains of rice I dreaded most. There I would sit, my mouth wide open, saliva streaming down over my chin from the corners of my mouth, my eyes wild with terror at the first sensation of such a morsel upon my tongue, until I had at length succeeded in spewing the entire mess from my mouth down over my clothes. Never once was I permitted to escape; always there would be a bowl of rice pudding set at my place, and each time Mother would assure me how little there was: “Come, eat it up!”

A hullabaloo of tears, coercion, and vomiting. The situation was such that I dared not move either my tongue or my lips; I would merely sit still in my chair, my mouth open, waiting for the inevitable convulsion which would eventually come to relieve it of its abominable contents. I could hardly have experienced anything else half so frightful, and all day long and far into the evening I would still find myself shuddering with horror.

The greatest fallacy in the world is the belief that we are happiest of all during childhood and that conditions in our lives grow worse with the years. The truth of the matter is that conditions steadily improve as we grow older and that life deals with us most harshly

at the outset and during our early development.

It is with a touch of pride that I tell you I long ago discovered just what this matter of rice pudding really was. The man who once fled from Misery Harbour sped as though under the lash forward toward comprehension. He was weak, so weak and afraid that truth seemed less dangerous than falsehood.

And at last one day I knew. And the knowledge came upon me with a sense of creeping horror, so that I stood still in the middle of the room with my face in a convulsion and saliva drooling down over my vest.

What was it, then? Oh, nothing much as I see it now, for I have become hardened, and dread is on the wane in the heart of the fugitive from Misery Harbour. There exists no longer any cause for dread after one has penetrated to the bottom of it and dares to be brave rather than cowardly.

You see, I had been far from ripe for sacramental feasts at the time of my confirmation. The idea of the sacrament had filled me with a sense of horror compared with which my revulsion for domestic rice pudding seems pale indeed. According to custom, we were expected on the first Sunday after confirmation to take communion, but this I had managed to avoid by coming late to church. Mother considered me wicked indeed, for one must always be careful to do as the rest do. Father stroked his beard and suggested that, if I cared to, I might take communion the following Sunday. Mother hesitated, however; wouldn't it seem strange for me to take communion the second Sunday after confirmation, when custom demanded that one go to the altar the Sunday following confirmation? That wouldn't do at all. No, she did not like the idea in the least. And with that the matter was dropped and never referred to again. Never to this day have I consumed the Body of the Lord.

In Canada I saw through the whole business, and that day in church a childhood calamity returned to me full force:

On the altar stood a bowl of rice pudding.

# THE HOUSE OF ALL DREAD

ONCE I was a guest in religion's very home. It was packed to the eaves with dread. A huge and sinewy dog was a member of that household, a fearsome snappish brute so highstrung and treacherous that the people themselves were afraid of it. No one dared to come at all close to the house. Over the windows were draped no ordinary curtains, but several thicknesses of blankets. Over one window was nailed a heavy padded quilt. I know all about this sort of thing. I always arrange things in that way myself whenever I remain overnight at Fagerstrand, and often I keep all windows covered with a thick layer of newspapers during the daytime as well, for it is not always exactly the darkness of night I dread. It is a face at the window. I cannot sit down quietly until I know I am hidden from view. The window before me, too, must be so covered over that only enough light to see by may filter in across my table. One last remaining open space can be covered over as quick as a flash at the sound of approaching footsteps. I do not wish to be seen when I am alone in a house. In the newspapers I make peep-holes; through these I control my surroundings without myself being seen.

I am not specifically afraid of the dark. I go for walks in the woods at night, and a graveyard does not faze me even at that late hour. No one must ever know when I am inside a house. Or exactly when I am out. To and from my cabin I always creep like a thief.

It is Adamsen's barn all over again, but it is also something else which has come into coincidence with it. It is an abandoned logging camp in Newfoundland where a man took refuge one dark unending night, but he found it worse there than it had been out in the forest. I cannot be alone many minutes in a house before I begin to re-experience that night. No one must know that I am alone in a house. No one must come peering in through the windows. No one must hear me inside. Inside my cabin, I open the door to no one who has not first sounded a familiar signal, and not even always then, either. I sit stock still with stiffened gaze and wait for my visitor to be gone. But I can also sit there in my cabin and be a human being who is alone and who has forgotten his pain.

In the house of dread I just mentioned lived a painter named Ferdinand Vogt and his sister. When I met them, Misery Harbour lay deep in the past, but in my mind the house of Vogt became one element of a three-ply mental fixation — three houses all in one: Vogt's, the logging camp, and Adamsen's barn. And each of these houses is expressive of the other two.

Vogt stopped me on the street one day, some four or five years ago. We were living in a little village by the sea. He spoke nervously, incoherently; and the reasons he gave for halting me were utterly senseless, as he himself could hear. The more he talked, the more involved he became. I spoke to calm him down. He wished me to come and see his paintings.

I am certain the man could not paint. Or even draw. A few small examples of his sculpture seemed to me to offer more promise. His paintings, nevertheless, made a tremendous impression upon me; they released a wealth of unpleasant emotion. There were scenes of drunken women being dragged beneath the waves in the blackness of night by Nökken; [4] others which portrayed Helhesten [5] snorting over a gleaming corpse in the darkness; Draugen [6] hauling the body of a woman into his boat; a man half swallowed up in a quagmire, his lips to a woman's breast. Always darkness with a little circle of light. Poisonous colors. Saffron, black, dull green. His whole expression seemed devoted to phantoms. Vogt was tall and thin, with a heavy mustache which gave his face a laughable warrior expression. His eyes were guileless and timid. I wonder if both he and his sister have not died of starvation before this, for such is usually the road taken by people who don't know how to bluff.

His sister was fully as tall as he, but thinner, more pallid, with the same frightened animal eyes, a face as uncanny as that of a ghost and as colorless. Moreover, she lacked her brother's intelligence, for Ferdinand Vogt had that, even though it resembled a mirror with waves and flaws in the glass. Well, but it was impossible ever to get a word out of his sister, so it is conceivable that she, too, had gifts of a sort. Whether or not she had, it would be quite impossible to know, for she would never once offer so much as a word of greeting or farewell, standing there tall and pale and silent instead,

seemingly at a loss, staring with an entreaty in those singular eyes of hers. But one sound ever passed her lips, an occasional low murmur, an anguished sound from her throat: “Heuheut!”

The house where the couple lived was always shut up tight. The door would be fastened with twin locks and a safety chain. Inside the door a heavy blanket would be draped from ceiling to floor. All doors between rooms would be locked. Vogt always spoke in a whisper to that silent sister of his.

After I had been their guest for a time, I found I had been admitted to all rooms but one, so I came to the conclusion that they shared a common bedroom. I chanced to see into it one single time. The window was tightly shuttered, with a huge painting hung over the shutters... A vault with bare walls. Two narrow beds placed side by side.

Then suddenly Vogt was standing behind me. We looked at each other. So many things would always happen when one stood thus confronting Vogt. His eyes would shift and a faint sound would come from his lips. His huge mustache would twitch, the movement flitting to all corners of his face. He would wet his lips and hold his breath. This was far more expressive than he realized, or was it not, perhaps? The air would always be heavily laden between us.

He made a little movement with his shoulders, his helpless fingers twisted and writhed like worms. He peered into the bedroom, made a hasty decision, and closed the door. “See here, Arnakke,” he said with a voice which was faintly tremulous,” I am without a model.”

“Yes?” I believe I appeared somewhat astonished.

“And now my sister and I have spoken about it — yes, we have —

“Yes?”

“The case is this, Arnakke; we know no one, no one we — no one to whom I can mention it… Well, if it happens that I employ my sister — models are so expensive…”

The situation was anything but amusing. “Yes, yes, of course,” I

said. “You might as well.”

“Hm. Ah, well . . .” But he seemed by no means reassured.

What there was, in the last analysis, about that house and the couple who occupied it I have never fully understood that is, what they had to do with me. Therefore I might have perhaps spared myself the effort of describing them. But this happened at a time when I was on the point of setting out after emancipation, and it was in the evening during the course of my visit in Vogt’s house that my resolution took form — the resolution to see Misery Harbour once again. It was there in his home that I saw two other stations along the road of my life: the logging camp in Newfoundland and Adamsen’s barn.

I did not return to Misery Harbour. I visited a place near by, but I went no farther.

One summer evening I made a call upon Vogt, and when, late at night, I left the house, it was not the same house, but the logging camp. And I recalled the night I spent there. I have always preserved my memory of that night. But this time my mind also recalled something which had happened there.

Such a camp consists of two connecting wooden houses. The door is in the middle; one enters a kind of hall, from which two doors lead to the cook’s house and the bunk-house. I had lain down to rest in a corner of the bunk-house. Soon afterwards, when night descended, I found myself wishing to Heaven I had stayed out in the forest, for that house was full of evil spirits and John Wakefield was standing outside with his face pressed up against the window-pane. But I did not dare go outside...

The first thing I saw was the skeleton of a horse. It lay not so very far away from me and it was bathed in a dim, mysterious light. The skeleton was black as ebony and it shone. It was alive, but it did not move. How, then, could I know that it was alive? Such things one simply knows without finding an explanation of how one knows. Its gaping head had shining black teeth.

Then the skeleton was gone, but from the floor where it had been

lying, there suddenly arose a wooden wall. There was a gate in the wall, and all the woodwork was carved with various designs. It was as though many names had been scribbled there, one on top of another. Behind the wall, on the other side of the gate, lived John Wakefield.

I called for him to come out. Three times I called, but he gave me no reply. Then I ran up to the gate and listened; I stretched my arms up over it and pleaded with him to come out. But he did not come out.

Far back away from the gate a child was weeping. And I choked when I heard that sound, for it was John's son. I cried: "You both must come out!" But nothing happened and I lay down sobbing there by that black wooden gate.

Then it was I myself who was a tiny weeping child in the darkness behind the gate and I called to that child to come out. But the gate remained closed.

After a time someone stirred behind the gate and, with heavy strides, drew near. "What is it you want of me, Espen? I must have rest here behind this black gate."

It was my father's voice.

[4] *Nökken* or *Nechan*, a water-sprite

[5] *Helhesten*, a mythological three-legged horse

[6] *Draugen*, a sinister apparition purported to sail in a boat, half of which is missing.

# ADAMSEN'S BARN HAS BURNED DOWN

I WONDER if you understand what I am trying to tell you of houses and the rare beings who inhabit them. The house is a highly important item in our existence; the human being is constantly

fabling about houses; we insist on going in and out. The Lord preserve thine exits and thine entrances! It is not practical to be without a house and we must also have a house when we are dead; we must return to our Father's house, to Adamsen's barn.

But we shall never arrive there. No Jesus has died on the cross for us, and Adamsen's barn has burned down…

When, that evening, I left the house of Ferdinand Vogt, I was unable to go straight home. I took the road out across a broad moor and I had the devil's own time of it. The sun was high above the horizon when at last I arrived back home.

You have every right to consider these discussions in the light of degenerate religion. But they are, on the contrary, the very wellspring and foundation of all religion. From the materials we have at hand we build us a home. That is all there is to it. However, it is, of course, only so much mist in the air to talk of degeneracy and regeneracy — that involves an ineffectual occultism. And if at length we take it seriously, it is the degenerate one who will be found in possession of the accursed and loathsome truth.

# THE BOOK OF ESPEN

## FOREWORD TO THE BOOK OFESPEN

ONCE I developed a lengthy fantasy. I began it during childhood, later enriching it with extensive additions and embellishments, until at length it had grown to huge proportions. I did not abandon it until I had passed my twentieth year. Today I but vaguely recall the true substance of it or what its purpose once was. In the main, it was a fairy-tale I invented as a child and developed as a youth on the theme of father and son. Begun very early in life, it was later made to include material gleaned from Biblical myths we listened to in school.

In those days we boys would say to each other, considering ourselves profound: "Whom did Cain marry? It must have been his sister."

Later on I heard of Lucifer and of Christ. My fancy went on building. The result was a tale of great length. I drew a line through all the myths. Cain, Lucifer, and Jesus often emerged as the same personality, which in turn became one with myself. As I said before, I persisted in this work of the imagination well on into my twentieth year, so it is difficult to say just how old I was at the time each element of the story was fitted into place.

There are people who go prowling about in search of a historical Jesus. I wonder what possible use they can have for such a figure? The child is better equipped to interpret the Bible, for the Bible is written from the view-point of the child in his developmental stage. The God therein is fickle and variable; He is the reflection of our growth. We contain within ourselves a stereotyped version of the Biblical God. This God, in fact, is dead. A historical Jesus does not exist, for even were we able to reach backward in time and touch a person who bore such a name, he, too, would be found to be but a reflection of his own growth. There exists no historical person whatever in the sense that hidebound formalists believe. There exist but name and growth.

The fairy-tale I once pieced together may be reminiscent of the Bible, but in abbreviated form. Otherwise, I suppose it does bear a fair resemblance, for, in addition to the fact that much of its material is pirated, it is weakly coherent and contains many a repulsive incident. It is the only true story existing in the world: the story of the son who is driven from home, travels about the world, and returns to beg for mercy. I know it by heart like a saga.

You will insist that it has no head or tail. Ah no, you are wrong, for it has both head and tail, in truth. The story of the holy stone might well have found its way into the old testament portion of my bible, had I, as a youth of eighteen or twenty, had the courage to allow my memory to probe clear to the bottom of the mystery surrounding Adamsen's barn. As it was, the holy stone became a bible in itself…

I can rattle off my bible from beginning to end with such alacrity that the sound will be a steady hum like that of a machine. And there are melodies in it which I can sing. It is growth's attempt to create order out of chaos, and certain repetitions may perhaps strike

your ear...

# ESPEN ARNAKKE

FAIRYLAND, Genesis, is only a dream in his heart, a blind dream carved in amber and gold. This he dares not dream as yet; it is a slumbering dream which he will succeed in raising from the deep after he has grown much older. In the main, these are words concerning him in his fifteenth year. I would rather not know him, but this is not to be.

Espen Arnakke came to be his name and he stared himself blind at the name. He would that some meaning might dwell in the name, but none did he ever find therein.

No one cared to listen to him when he spoke, so dull of mind he was. And he was unsightly to behold, the unsightliest one of a family. In the far distant past he would often lie in his mother's bed, gathering strength before he cried out. Then his mother would take time to talk with Espen, while he lay blissfully awake.

No wiser did he become with the passing of the years; he was the dullest mind of a family.

But days came when he was, in a natural way, mature, though not as yet confirmed by the church. No, he was a precocious youth who still had all of eight months to wait. In secret he wept for the opposite sex, though in public he assumed a grown-up face. Indeed, the smith Sorensen had once called Espen a small boy still, whereupon Espen had at once lost his head and, screaming uncontrollably like a doomed swine, had rammed his head into the belly of Sorensen, the smith.

This had also been because the man's name was Sorensen, for this was the name of a certain loathsome woman who was hated by all the schoolchildren in Jante, until she had suddenly taken passage for the Dark Continent for the purpose of converting heathen youngsters. He danced with joy the time he heard of this and gave

himself extra large cuts and bruises on his legs with the damnable iron-shod canal-boats he was obliged to wear on his feet. For ten solid years his stockings were always caked with blood and pus. The fashion was such that he whose legs were free from these signs of martyrdom believed he was something. At least twice a week the boys would return home with the flesh kicked from their ankles and shins. But this was meant to be.

## THE EUNUCH

BUT in his fifteenth year there were giants in the land, although a giant still would pale upon encountering some teacher from school. If he wept in secret, it was in secret only, for there were giants in the land, giants who several times a week would attend meetings of the Salvation Army, where souls were saved with a boom-fallera. He and other plucky lads would show their approval of the speaker by falling out of their chairs and by saying amen in the wrong places. And then they would be cast out of heaven and would saunter gayly through the streets of Jante with bloody noses, for the men of the Salvation Army are strong indeed when the Holy Spirit moves them.

Oh yes, the lads of Jante believed figuratively and actually that there were giants in the land. But where was Agnes and where was Petra and where was Thyra? He played false with the names and honour of these girls and boasted of conquests won in private; he tossed his head and was secretive, though he nevertheless allowed it to leak out what he had done to Agnes and Thyra behind bushes and fences where, as a matter of fact, he had lain quite alone.

He will feel the hangman's iron grip, he will make the grim descent when the trapdoor springs open beneath his feet. He will be driven to the gallows with cudgels and lances and his neck will fit into the noose and his fall will be checked by a length of rope. Winds whisper to him of the scaffold.

He expressed himself smartly, like an editorial in the election edition of a newspaper, about God, socialism, and the obvious fallacy of the books of Moses. Poor fools, those who still regard the latter as law though Moses spent fifty years of his life in dire

immorality. They are right, but with people who are right or who have no heavy loads to bear, there is certainly something wrong. Oh, shoot a virtuous teacher, one who knows where Valparaiso is and Kilimanjaro, fling filth in his face and murder in advance his superiors, so that the wretched fellow may have no one to whom he may deliver his unimpeachable complaint!

He asserted emphatically that no God existed, though he gave this matter much thought. God was a man who had a harem, and Espen was merely the eunuch.

The eunuch is bound to Harbour strange thoughts.

Tentatively he seated himself on the plinth to an unknown god and simulated the expression of a pillar saint. Beneath the plinth is a grave; in it they have laid his brother's bones, the little lad who died long years ago.

## AGNES, AGNES, AGNES

AND now comes the book of Solomon. By night and by day I brood over the riddle of Woman. And the girl's name was Agnes. She would solve the riddle for me, but no riddle existed and then I lighted a funeral pyre whose flames invaded the barn. But even before, fire had flamed above the barn.

Just as Agnes was on the point of surrendering the secret, a weasel came and bit her. It was in Adamsen's barn; dark it was there as in a cellar, and I was not brave when she screamed like a mad thing that I oughtn't to do such a thing. I did nothing. She fled and struck her head against beams and screamed still more wildly and fell down onto another level, where she screamed even more horribly than before. And from then on I knew no longer what I thought, for the weasel fastened its teeth in my left index finger. I howled with terror, for what manner of beast was that? I strangled and massacred that devil, and God alone knows what its motives were.

Agnes hath no man the power to corrupt.

Agnes is the holy name. Only the sweet and the pure are named

Agnes.

And there was another woman whose name was likewise Agnes; I loved her deeply. That evening you laughed at me I went with your namesake into Adamsen's barn. And the weasel had your face, Agnes, your ferocious row of teeth, your round head, your deceitfulness, your crushing arrogance. Agnes, when I remember your breast, I must scream.

You have I desired to slay, to murder brutally in your bed. Agnes, you have I sworn to hate, Agnes, Agnes.

But life took Agnes away from me. It was the old family saga, the old agrarian affair which does not fall under the jurisdiction of the department of agriculture, concerning the Grand Khan and his cowed son who wrote his lamentations upon the sky.

# SODOM

AND this is one of the books of Moses: Adam gave his daughter to Abel, and Cain insisted upon his right. It was not granted unto him and he strode forth into the world over a brother's corpse.

Abroad in the world I encountered love, but not always was it what I had heard said it ought to be. Hardest of all I found it to look with serenity upon love between man and man.

There are people who go about slapping other people on the back. Of these I have always been very much afraid and, to avoid their attentions, I have many times gone circling backward about a room. But such lumps of flesh apparently have no nerves; they always keep close after me, slapping away without cease and craving my most honest opinion, even though my tongue cleaves tight to the roof of my mouth and my anger mounts the while. Docile, I answer yes, yes, of course, until suddenly, without warning, I plant my fist fair in the eye of the beast.

When Cain slew his brother Abel it was not only because of their sister. It may sometimes be necessary to kill the man one simply cannot endure to have around.

And I was abroad in the world and there were men who came after me. It will suffice if I mention but three of these.

There was one period during my fifteenth year, when I felt vastly underrated and poetically sick at heart. Then one Sunday, down by the beach, I met a polished young gentleman of perhaps thirty. He spoke with an interesting accent and turned out to be a foreigner. He told me he was lonely. His eyes were a rich glowing black. His hair was thick with pomade.

Grown men, as a rule, seldom spoke to me and of course I did not care to associate with boys younger than myself. And here, all at once, a polished foreigner stood before me and actually offered me recognition. Trembling, I ventured to tell him that my age was seventeen. But even aside from this, my friend from abroad had an eye for sound worth: he used formal address in speaking to me and offered me a cigarette. Ah, and then he came out with the most unbelievable thing of all, a remark which added a full yard to my growth. He said: “By the way, you need a shave.”

At that, the sun fairly gasped and halted in its course and the forest seemed to dance before my eyes. So I needed a shave!

It so happened that he was, by lucky chance, a barber, and we might as well take a turn over to where he lived, in spite of the day being Sunday. This would provide us with the opportunity of having a glass of wine together; furthermore, as he had said, he was lonely.

Sweating with pride, I accompanied my glamorous friend through the streets of Jante and, all the time, I was hoping with all my heart that we might meet Petrus. A far cry now from the one who longs to be hanged and who goes snooping about the gallows in the night.

Had my fine friend been a murderer — and he might just as well have been precisely that — I suppose he would have shaved my entire head from my body and thus slaked forever my thirst for salt water. Such a sensation, how ever, was not vouchsafed me.

I did not pound on the table in manly fashion as I should much prefer to believe. He was, of course, so mature and so cultivated,

that I felt utterly crushed in his presence. It must be said in all justice that it was he who was the more decent of the two and let me go when he saw how frightened I was. It was an express train that carried me from the seventh heaven to the bottom of a mud puddle. There went my great and fine friendship, and the wound I sustained was that of a Caesarean operation. Already I had arranged it all in my mind how he and I together should go forth and conquer the world. He, however, had been dreaming of nothing so remote; his thought of conquest lay in quite another direction.

Conquest? He merely proposed that I show him something, because he had shown me something. That anyone outside myself could be moved by so low a desire filled me with a panic of animal fear.

Even so, he was gentle and friendly to the last, a person of refinement — perhaps simply a little disappointed.

The next in order was no gentleman. He was a Negro, a fellow who had been snatched from his native habitat hardly more than a day or two before.

It was in a city where I had been arrested for walking along the street exactly like other people. I was locked up in a cell and treated to a bowl of porridge which tasted fine after a week's fast. The humanitarian spirit of the place went even so far that I was granted the companionship of that enormous brown-hued fellow, who had been locked up for failing to see eye to eye with Plato. And this was on Christmas Eve, when all little children lay dreaming in their beds of what Santa Claus would leave in their stockings that night. I dare say that we danced about the Christmas tree. For many hours we conducted a pantomime which most certainly ought to have been filmed and shown on the screen with the caption "Holy Night, Silent Night." The Negro rolled his eyes. I rolled mine. He came forward like a bull. I bounced away like a rubber ball. He dared not yield to any degree of violence, for the guard would surely become angry were he to be awakened from his pleasant dreams about Santa Claus. We continued dancing about Phallos, in the absence of amore slavering cryptic symbol. I was worn out and undernourished. I was having anything but a good time. The Negro was slavering and rolling his eyes: "I never saw the like of how you do act! Just because I'm black, you needn't go putting on airs and

thinking you are better than me!”

This was too much like Jante and more than I could stand. It was four o’clock in the morning when, for the last time, he showed me the whites of his eyes in an expression of soul-stirring loveliness. This time I walked forward to meet him. He stretched forth his arms and laughed gently. Then, venturing into his embrace, I suddenly gave him a Dutch bow, directing the thrust of my head with all the force I had in me, for I was well aware that the Negro skull is three inches thick for the purpose of resisting the ultra-violet rays of the tropical sun. The result exceeded all expectations. We both crashed to the floor, and when we awoke, each was in his own cell. I had an inch-long cut in my scalp and a headache which remained with me several days. The Negro felt fine and explained that something had suddenly struck us both — had a live wire broken loose and landed on our heads?

The third time. It was in the entrance to a hotel. A monstrous big fellow came lumbering down the street. He was as ugly as sin and his head was that of a jackass. He was decidedly more unsightly than even I and, presumably, had met with less success in fields of eroticism We were alone in the street, the hour was approaching midnight. I had seen this villain before; he recognized me, too, and did not venture to look me in the eyes. Just as he was about to pass by, he suddenly wheeled and flung his arms about me. He was as strong as an and I was unable to free my arms. Without a word, he began to bestow his blessings upon me right there on the sidewalk beneath the hotel’s arc-light.

But he immediately came in for a bit of medicine which, I am sure, stands as an isolated example in the annals of eroticism, the administration of which proved as unexpected to me as it was to him. He received the better part of the last meal I had eaten fair in the face!

“You damned swine!” he shrieked.

I laughed hysterically and fled. Whenever he appears in my dreams today, I laugh in a panic of fear and disgorge a rat onto the bed-covers.

# THE GALLOWS

FOUR forms are dangling from a four-armed gallows: a swine, a dog, a jackass, and I. The arms of the gallows are slowly rotating on a ball-bearing. Dreamily we sail around in the universe, bound to earth by means of four lengths of hemp fastened to four projecting arms of a common gallows. But far apart from each other are our souls, though the distance varies to dog, to jackass, to swine. And, like satellites in a solar system, we know each other but from a single fixed angle — be it canine, porcine, asinine, human.

# CANST THOU NOT LOVE

WHERE girls were concerned, it was other-wise than in the case of lewd, voracious males.

The vessel was the Ragnar of Gävle, a coffin which seemed constantly on the verge of foundering. Each time I went to sleep, I would confide myself to Heaven's care, for the craft might at any moment decide to disintegrate over a wide surface of water.

I had deserted the ship which had landed me in Boreholm, or perhaps I had simply missed her when she sailed. The whole episode remains obscure in my mind. For three nights I slept behind a gravestone in a churchyard in Ronne, until the sexton discovered me and lodged a complaint. But before that happened, the inspiration of grand love had come upon me in the graveyard. Not as yet had I become so thoroughly sodden and befouled that such noble sentiments were beyond me.

Into the cemetery each day had come a little seventeen-or eighteen-year-old girl dressed in black. Always I would be lying behind a privet hedge, from whence I would devour her with my eyes.

But at length came an evening when I rose and addressed her, assuring her that she need not be afraid. But that she should become really afraid as I indicated had never crossed my mind. My outward appearance was such that I ought certainly to have sought her after sundown. She became as white as the proverbial sheet, gave forth a shriek, and, before I knew it, I was in full flight across

the graves with the sexton in hot pursuit. I hopped over a wall, but became entangled in a barbed-wire fence and was led in triumph to the police station.

When a man wears a collar and a part in his hair, he may indulge in a little of everything; lacking the collar and the part, however, it is inevitable that he should be put to work breaking stones to the profit of the state.

After I had enriched the state with paving blocks sufficient for a full kilometer of highway, I received two crowns and, utterly discouraged, walked the distance to Svaneke over the very stones I had shaped. I suppose the girl has never got over the belief that only by a miracle did she escape from me with her life.

But Cain became old and it was long since he had been in Bornholm. He had always yearned for home and he himself did not know why he gadded about as he did. He sat down and wrote the genealogy of the human being.

# THE FAMILY IN THE BOILING POT

THERE had been a large family in heaven. Lucifer and the older daughters had grown up, but the youngest were still quite small. The old Khan made a horrible example of Lucifer, who never seemed able to leave the angels alone, but kept plucking them from the stem. The Khan felt he was being robbed of his estate and said that it was he who had cast out his eldest son. And all the youngsters shuddered. Look at Lucifer, who goes roaming around outside heaven's ramparts of solid turf and thinks only of evil! And Lucifer was not so strong as he himself had believed. He had a terribly hard time of it out in the world and shed tears for his mother, who remained back home with Jehovah. His heart was a caldron of hate.

Never do the old become wise. Lucifer slipped stealthily into camp in the night and whispered into the ear of his youthful sister. Her name was Eve and she was very beautiful. She spoke to her brother Adam, saying that all was not true that Jehovah had said about Lucifer.

And Adam was likewise of the opinion that virtue was trying to the patience. Was there any rhyme or reason in it that the old man should enjoy a monopoly?

And together they went into Adamsen's barn.

"All right, you can go with Lucifer if you like!" the old man wrathfully said. And he cast them out, in order that the infection might not spread.

But Lucifer saw that Adam and Eve were in love, and he begrudged them their happiness. He was experienced in cunning; he enticed Eve and betrayed his younger brother.

"See, I have brought forth a man who is the Lord," Eve exclaimed when she had given birth to Cain.

Adam did not care for this. A successor to the throne is useful, but hardly beloved. Adam persecuted Cain while Cain was growing up; he threatened him and beat him, Father and son were far from caring for each other. Adam laughed in his heart at Cain when the queen called in the king for official business.

Then Eve brought forth another Eve and she was given to Cain, but Adam could not forgive the fact that a son had been born to him, and all his spite he directed against Cain. So he gave the new Eve to Abel.

Adam and Abel formed a pact of friendship while Cain, in a dangerous mood, was out pacing his field. And in the evening Cain slew Abel, and his tears flowed out upon the body of his brother.

But Lucifer was unable to endure freedom; he was tortured with longing; he was not by nature, as was Adam, a placid tiller of the soil. He realized how full of sin he was and he placed his faith in the law of Jehovah.

Then he went up into the highest mountain and uttered his no to Jerusalem; he renounced the world and all worldly honour and, ill at heart, yielded to the will of his father. But not until he hung nailed to the cross and denied his own mother did the old man let

his grace descend upon him. So here I sit in exile, excluded, dreaming my dreams of atonement.

But we are, each day, both Lucifer and Jesus. It is the dream of our heart to separate the two.

**THE END OF THE BOOK OF ESPEN**

# THE RIGHT THINGS

HERE we sit and the one who now speaks is a man more serene of mind than he was a week ago. And years have passed since the time he had real use for atonement. It is growth and development, it is progress toward the goal of solid worth, the goal supreme, though it ever pales and perishes when one is within but a single stride of it.

But what, then, was religion in Jante? There is no all-embracing formula to express it. I am thinking primarily of the social stratum from which I myself emerged. Therein existed a religion consisting of prostration before persons of refinement, or of their defamation, which amounts to the same thing. And there was the bisexual worship of the minister and his wife.

But the official religion was most particularly a demand that each should do as the rest. This was deeply engraved in every mind. This religion is based upon the Law of Jante. He who does not baptize his child thinks he is something. This has nothing to do with Christianity. Fear for the fate of the unbaptized child is a fear of Jante; but unbaptized children do not exist, either, for the reason that such a child is not properly born. The belief is general that the man who refuses to have his child baptized has something wrong with his head; first one laughs, later becomes angry.

It is a religion which assails each variation from the norm as though it were a pest. It is a religion which strives to achieve, spiritually and physically, a standard type. It rigorously sees to it that all is carried out to the letter with regard to baptism, confirmation, marriage, and burial. But the true worship of God is something of which one is ashamed and it is a favourite sport to play the freethinker.

This finds its best expression in slander directed at the minister.

These forms which have lost their content, if they ever had any content, may later on manage to pass muster for persons bound down by a ridiculous superstitiousness of nature. Protestantism has abandoned the absolute and set up in its place a sense of insecurity, a dread of not doing things correctly. Naturally, this insecurity of mind takes root fundamentally in the fact that, in matters of this sort, correctness, in any absolute sense, does not even exist. The question of burial, for example, presents no greater problem than that of disposing of a corpse and of doing so rationally. But the human mind somehow involves itself with an intense faith in the existence of forms which express a right way and a wrong way and, as a result, glows hot with uncertainty, often to the point of madness. Most people know in their own hearts that a funeral in its existent form is a gruesome backdrop against which to view the passing of a human life. One dashes hither and yon, drives around with the corpse, jabbers and carries on until sorrow is supplanted by irritation. If we have buried the one we loved best in the world, we leave the cemetery with a feeling of relief and praise to God that it is all over at last! But we do, not say so; we fuss and fume. Cremation is even worse, a travesty on the old-fashioned manner of burial, all the old harrowing forms in full flower. Life is concluded at death, not at the grave. If we must have religious ceremonies, these certainly in no way concern the corpse as such, no matter what point of view we bring to bear.

During my account of the holy stone I likewise reported my mother's death and touched briefly on her funeral. This ended, like most funerals, in a shocking farce. The minister was under the impression that the occasion demanded that he say something really brilliant; he succeeded only in uttering more base nonsense than a half-baked freethinker could in half the time. He repeated himself, lost the thread, and repeated his repetition. With sudden authoritativeness he repeated this once again; then, his gaze meeting mine, he fell silent for a moment, before concluding with sudden emphasis: "Into the death of the dead shall ye enter and find that the death of the dead is the life of the living through the death of the dead, for the death of the dead is not the death of the dead, but the greater death of the dead is — hm —the death of the dead

is life. Of the death of the dead shall ye be not afraid!"

Such unconscionable pother! But Jante requires that there be an oration, knowing in advance that a minister may be counted on to express himself with a minimum of sense. And never discovers that this need not be so, for the reason that it is always considered a public scandal for anyone to grasp what a minister means. One takes it for granted that the minister can never be understood. "Oh, what a lovely oration!" Aunt Oline remarked.

So far so good. But now our turn to take active part in the ceremony was at hand and, with it, the awful dread of doing the wrong thing. Those of the sons who were at home, together with several more distant relatives, were to bear the coffin out, and at once a conspiracy arose against a certain person who, at the last minute, was not to be a bearer, since someone had desired another in his place. The fellow who was not wanted was treated to a swift kick at the crucial moment when places were assigned, and an extra tramp on the toes to make sure. While he was recovering from his astonishment, we others moved off with the coffin. "Served him right!" Aunt Oline said.

Skyldfri Sidenius and Aunt Oline circled about us like two bees, for they possessed knowledge of how things were to go and were afraid lest something might happen which was in conflict with their knowledge. Even how we were to move our legs was whispered into our ears as we marched along with the coffin. Skyldfri directed one flank of the procession, Oline the other, and every now and then they would exchange poisonous glances, as it frequently turned out from the orders they gave that their knowledge was not in all ways identical, even though they knew What they knew with precisely the same degree of fear-stricken certainty.

Aunt Oline had always suspected me of thinking I was something and therefore gave the lion's share of her attention to me. "Now on with your hat, Espen! Espen, are you holding on tight? Walk in step with Petrus, Espen! Espen, look straight ahead! Now off with your hat, Espen!"

Then it was I stopped dead in my tracks. The others were ahead, and they, too, came to a halt, without turning their heads, however,

for that would have been improper, and, since the whole procession was now at a standstill, each bearer probably thought in his own mind that it was the correct thing to halt at this point. Oline panted and whispered: “Good heavens, you must be mad, Espen! What’s the matter with you, Espen?”

I stared at her and she stared back in ludicrous consternation. She turned red as fire, then paled, then flushed again. I started the procession going again, meanwhile boiling with rage. The situation was not improved by the fact that the man directly ahead of me was Cousin Oscar. Skyldfri had convinced him that the occasion called for a silk hat, although such an article of apparel our family had thus far done quite well without. He was wearing it to the accompaniment of brown shoes and a dress-coat which, though this may have been altogether right and proper, none the less did not detract from the ridiculousness of his appearance. It is hardly dignified for a man to go walking along with such a funnel on his head and long tails hanging down over his rump. But Oline was sick with rage because it was not Petrus who had such a hat. Was he not the head of the family? This Oscar Sidenius always had to go about thinking he was something, and, to be sure, it was all Skyldfri’s fault.

Afterwards we trailed through the town to the home of the temperance society, where, out of respect for the family’s dry element, we partook of coffee. Oline, far ahead with Petrus, seething with anger over my shameless conduct and Oscar’s high hat. Skyldfri, promenading with Oscar, gazing down upon Jante because her husband had a silk hat. What did we have here, a woman who perhaps thought she was something? … We others loitered along in more or less open formation, each doing his best to make it seem that he was merely out for a walk by himself and in no way conscious that he had just attended a funeral. Well, what else were we to do, when those who knew something avoided us, and people were laughing at Skyldfri?

And then a funeral always has its troop of spectators who make a survey of the current sorrow and make their formal report. If one is weak enough, one takes pains to present an acceptable exterior at the grave. Silent burial is a step forward when it is intended in all

reverence, but it would be quite unthinkable in Jante: “Well well! So they begrudge their dead mother a simple honor, do they? Well well!” The insult and injury would prove worse than the funeral itself. “They keep us out, they think they are something; what’s good enough for us is not good enough for them!”

A corpse must be disposed of. It is no more the one who is gone than are the clothes he leaves behind. It should be disposed of away from all public gaze, removed by people maintained for that purpose. No grave should exist as a shrine to the irretrievable. Those who cannot remember their dead ones without the aid of a grave and flowers will forget them immediately even so. And, too, one can go through all the ceremonies one likes without the presence of a dead body.

The main thing in the Jante religion is not that an act be performed, but that it be performed in the manner laid down. The fear of Jante precludes the slightest variation. At my confirmation I experienced it, too, in very, much the same manner as at my mother’s funeral.

In school I had heard something about church architecture. The teacher had explained to us the origin of the *vaabenhus*, or porch adjoining the entrance. It did not appertain to the church proper, but was an enclosure wherein the worshippers of an earlier day would deposit their weapons for the duration of the service, and can still to this day be used for a similar purpose if any member of the congregation has something he does not wish to carry with him into the church. It is quite all right, our teacher continued, if, for example, one retains one’s hat while in the *vaabenhus*.

When I came marching in a line of other confirmands up to the door of the church, with Mother and Father behind me, I saw that all the other boys whipped off their hats while still outside the church. But I had been better instructed; I continued cheerfully on my way with my cap still on my head and with everything arranged in mind how, with a grandiose gesture, I would doff it the moment I entered the church proper, with a courtly bow for the Lord thrown in for good measure. But Mother was directly behind me, and she for one was in total in my ignorance of the aforementioned *vaabenhus-theory*. At the precise moment when I was on the point of making my very elegant and felicitous entrée unto God the Father, I

felt a trembling claw feeling about my head, my cap being torn from my crown, and my hair being hideously rumpled. “What’s the matter? Can’t you think for yourself, you idiot?” she grated in my ear.

I lost my temper immediately and continued my march through the church like a stooped and hopeless dolt, my face as red as a beet, all trace of composure lost.

Such a thing is other and far more than merely amusing. It strengthens one’s feelings of uncertainty. Thus it is not sufficient, either, that a thing should simply be done properly.

That which Jante demands of an individual, that individual must supply. It would seem, in this connection, that measles assume an equal importance with baptism and confirmation. Everyone has measles. It has long ago been established that everyone shall have measles. But I was unable to comply with this requirement. My brothers and sisters all had measles, each in his turn. But I never seemed quite up to acquiring the disease. As an adult, I have shared the same bed for eight days with a person suffering with diphtheria without realizing the nature of his illness, but never have I fallen victim to such infections. Possibly it is merely that chance has always been against me, but it was once rather singular that I failed to develop scarlet fever, and no less eccentric that later on I quite missed out on typhus. Surely it has not been as a reward for virtue that I have remained consistently free of venereal disease. I never seem able to push matters beyond the point of a common cold.

But Mother did not like this absence of measles in my case. Each time I felt a bit under the weather, she would examine me carefully to see if perhaps I had not at last proved fortunate enough to have picked up a case of measles. I know that she made every effort in the world to convince herself that actually I had had the disease, and she was several times on the verge of making this statement to people, halted in her intention only by one look at my face. She probably regarded this as a quite pardonable white lie. The world was simply not to know that she had a son who had never been down with measles.

Time passed and I entered my thirteenth year. Then one day I fell ill

and was obliged to remain in bed. The doctor called and prescribed one thing or another. There is no least doubt what ailed me: I had influenza.

Mother accompanied the doctor to the door and there asked him what my illness was. His answer lay on the tip of his tongue, but Mother, at once afraid to hear his verdict, hastily asked in a tremulous voice: “Don’t you suppose, doctor, it may be measles?”

He looked at her in astonishment. “Measles? You saw that there was no rash, didn’t you?”

Mother stared at him, dread stamped upon her face. “What, isn’t it measles, after all?”

The doctor had a busy day ahead of him and he was a choleric gentleman. He laughed. “By Jove, I believe you’ve said something!” And, with that, he departed.

But Mother was satisfied. At last I had measles. The doctor had said so. She went over to Jens Hansen’s and breathed the news and went straight from there to pay Aunt Dagny a visit. “Oh dear, so Espen’s come down with the measles. ‘Tisn’t so easy, but everyone of course has to have the measles, so it may as well be sooner as later, but the really odd thing about it is he didn’t catch them until *after* his confirmation... ”

Vaccination is a ritual even more sacred than measles, for it has more style to it and can be counted on as confidently as baptism and confirmation. We soon forget the true purpose of vaccination, and I have often wondered whether those in authority are not likewise on the point of forgetting. It has often seemed to me that vaccination might be in a way related to circumcision, a wholesome procedure which has become sacramental and nothing other than sacramental.

Wholesome procedure? Hm, I now believe that circumcision is the old Khan’s direct expression of power, a symbolic castration of all his thralls. Fröken Nibe never seemed able to negotiate this delicate matter of circumcision and she would always refer to it as “Jewish baptism.” Secretly we would laugh at her, for we knew better. But

now I have almost arrived at the point of conceding that she is correct. Symbolical drowning and symbolical castration veil the same intent.

Behind the forms stir no end of obscure menaces which are held in check by the magic of these very forms. The world behind them is the phantom world, and the dead are believed to engage upon undertakings very similar to those which lie within the Jante man's horizon. They appear with sour faces, walk the earth again, or tell where buried treasure lies. They are blood-sucking vampires or, like little boys, go knocking upon window-panes. Demonworship and belief in ghosts, signs, and portents flourish. Hell overflows and floods the earth during the night, and, presumably, heaven was once the daytime, which has since been conquered by formalism. Naïvely is it asserted in certain quarters that the modern man has rid himself of hell. But hell is all we have retained, though all reliable intelligence would indicate that Satan is today no more than a senile dolt and that his government has become entirely parliamentary.

# THE WHEEL OF TORTURE

FRU HENRIETTE, the wife of old Sandness, who was my father's employer, died. Whereupon Sandness sent word to the doctor that there was something more to be done for Henriette. The old councilor of war arrived post-haste and bellowed in through the window to inquire what the devil he had to do here now that the woman was dead?

Well now, begging the doctor's pardon, but the point was Henriette always had had a frightful dread of being buried alive and had left a request that the soles of her feet be seared with a red-hot iron before her coffin was closed. For that would surely bring her round if she were, strictly speaking, still alive.

The doctor declared that when he made out the certificate of death it was a superfluity to demand more and that nothing in the world could then recall Henriette to life. However, after some debate he thundered an order to heat the iron. The old warhorse seared her

with a vengeance, declaring that, so far as he could see, the old woman had not batted an eyelash.

He was already on his way out, but there was still something more on Sandness's mind. True, his wife had now had her request fulfilled, but the fact remained that Sandness himself had a request to make…

Well, what was it? Sandness cleared his throat… Perhaps it might sound a bit strange — but inasmuch as his wife was dead — even in her own opinion, she was —now if the doctor might be so kind — would he cut off the lady's legs?

The doctor took one leap in the air. Cut off her legs? What the deep-dyed devil in deepest hell was the matter with this silly vulgar nincompoop? Cut off the lady's legs? Was the poor old soul to appear before Saint Peter carrying her severed limbs, one under each arm? Perhaps he ought to cut off her head as well? And set it on a stake? Break her body on the wheel? What? What?

No, no, oh dear, no! Sandness exclaimed in self-defense. He wished no ill upon her corpse, not that exactly... But if the truth be told, the late Henriette had always been pretty hard to get along with. No, not exactly that, but still — And now that she really was dean' as she herself had proved, so to speak, she had nothing to do on earth… wouldn't have any walking and suchlike to do... so what use did she have for legs, then?

The doctor turned wildly to Father, who happened to be present, and roared: "What is this jackass driving at?" With deep gravity Father replied: "Herr Sandness, you see, does not desire that his late wife shall return and walk the earth, Herr Doctor."

The doctor made for the street and fled, with Sandness tight at his heels. The old warhorse spat out an oath, but permitted himself to be led back into the house. Wasting his time on such tomfoolery, such stuff and nonsense, while roundabout in Jante countless sensible people were on the point of death as they lay in bed awaiting him on his rounds! But to a certain degree he yielded. "I shall simply cut her tendons. That will do just as well."

Sandness was skeptical. Henriette was no ordinary woman. Nevertheless, he had to be satisfied. For the purpose of rendering poor Henriette harmless, the doctor chose a pair of shears used for the quartering of fowl. I wonder who later came by them! ... Fru Sandness, after having been thus hamstrung, would certainly be unable to walk the earth again, even as a ghost.

Sandness shook his head. It was absolutely incredible how much a doctor knew!

# FRÖKEN NIBE HAD A BIBLE

THE BIBLE had no place in our home in Jante; its mere presence would have been a disgrace. Not even my most pious relatives owned a copy. Thus far as witnesses they did not dare to go.

Once when a group of us youngsters were, on one occasion or another, calling on Fröken Nibe, there in her bookcase we perceived the book. Slyly we called other's attention to it and sneered as though it had been a symbol of immodesty on her part. It was disgusting when Fröken Nibe would instruct us in religion or in the history of our country, for she was the sort of person who dares to climb into the witness-box only before children. We would sit shamefaced and scowling and utterly detesting her. She would weep whenever she touched upon a lost war and we therefore soon reached the conclusion that national defeat is preferable to victory.

The Bible had no connection with the Janteism which had been builded upon the Law of Jante. Whereas Fröken Nibe strove to instill in our minds the message contained in the Bible, life itself preached the message of the Law of Jante.

# THE PRIEST

THERE are three years of my life which, for reasons of my own, I choose to term my three blind years. I have never dared to go into them very deeply. I have never mentioned them before. They are the three years which followed my flight from Misery Harbour.

I am unable to penetrate to the bottom of this question even now. It lies in another connection. But I must mention it briefly, none the less. The zoologist had turned himself wrong side out and for three years appeared as the theologist. Eleven months after the murder of John Wakefield I had decided upon a clerical career.

The zoologist demands to know. The theologist is one who wills not to know. I drowned the zoologist, the psychologist, and the murderer like three kittens in a pail of theology. At any rate, I made the attempt. A tremendous spiritual upheaval was the inevitable result. A murderer in the pulpit! I had taken it into my head to forget life, to become a priest and to address serious remarks to a congregation, profound and obscure remarks, remarks which were lofty and beautiful, but at the same time utterly moral.

In Misery Harbour lay John Wakefield.

And so it is that I am compelled to muse: What would the unhappy boy whose name was Espen have done without formalism? By means of it he saved himself, through it he gained room to breathe. It was his N.E.P. — an expectancy, a consolidation of his inner front before the next attack; he buried his tomahawk deep in the earth, but he never forgot where it lay. I believe that the human individual is the strongest being on earth. There exists no strength greater than that of the human being. I uttered profound obscurities and assumed a learned air... and these were not hypocrisy. Here was no hardened sinner desiring to thrust his way into the pulpit. Here was a human being whose very life was in peril. I do not know whether this is expressive of priests in general, but I do know that it is expressive of theology and its logical chalk-line.

I am curious to know now whether I might ever have been able to go through with it. The answer may be both yes and no. Had I continued in need of soul-atrophy, I should certainly have become a priest. But the day came when I found no further use for it, so I forsook it and began wandering about without aim…

I believe that my clerical pretensions had already been awakened in Misery Harbour. For I did something before I fled: I knelt down and prayed for the man I had killed.

I did not see at the time how monstrous of me that was. Rather, I was somewhat consoled now and then by the thought that I had done so. I had added a few words to my prayer, to the effect that I was certain the Lord, being wise, would not take it ill of me, for He could see very well that it was not for myself I was praying, at unfortunately there existed no one else who would take the trouble to pray for the late John Wakefield.

But I have forgotten the Lord's Prayer since. I am unable to repeat it, in spite of all the trouble Fröken Nibe had taken. During the period of my yearning to become a priest I considered this one of the Devil's wicked snares, contrived to cut me off from salvation. I had thought to make a copy of the Lord's Prayer on a little slip of paper to have with me when I mounted the pulpit, in order that no one might discover that his priest was unable to repeat: "Our Father who art in heaven."

All these problematical jim-jams are somewhat difficult of expression at this time. Both the priest and the panic-stricken freethinker are but stages of development long left behind. It would appear to me now that there never has been a heaven, or any God to occupy it. No emotions of any kind are stirred within me, and this condition makes life endurable and renders terror well-nigh dead. I am responsible for my own life within life's proper circle, nothing more. Consequently I now regard the dead as irrelevant and no longer hold them in awe. Let the theologians seek letters outside the alphabet. I shall stick to those lying between Alpha and Omega.

"I believe you're a freethinker! "Aunt Oline once accused me. "How dare you!"

But who had taught me to pray for the soul of the one I myself had slain? Probably the very persons who would be most disconcerted by the blasphemy of my words. The monstrous fact of a murderer praying over his victim may be unearthed by anyone taking the trouble to glance through a boys' book by Carit Etlar, the title of which Gjöngehövdingen. A certain teacher once read it to us in school, and from that incident may be traced this phase of my spiritual turmoil. One of the book's pure and shining heroes murders an old woman whom he considers it necessary to destroy. He drowns her with the author's, the teacher's, and his own entire

approval, afterwards begging God to look with mercy upon her soul.

The hero is a grown man. As were the author and the teacher. But it was an immature boy who followed the instruction he had received. It was no great distance from school to Misery Harbour.

You ought to have heard the deep and bogus pathos the teacher put into his voice during his reading of the prayer for the dead. I am not the first who has identified the executioner with the priest, and in a moment of distraction forgotten that: " 'Vengeance is mine,'saith the Lord."

# APATHY

I HAVE attempted to give you a glimpse of Janteism. He who lives under the Law of Jante is, by very nature, a murderer; one and all has he slain, parents, brothers, sisters, and many others, all because he is bleeding with hatred. That something actual came to pass in my own case makes no essential difference; only that it set me on the trail of myself and all the others.

But I have regretted it bitterly — that is, if my hysterical grief over the bursting of hell's hinges may properly be termed regret — this bitterness over the fact that I should have been the one! But things became so damnably involved! It was one of those moments when a word, a glance, suffices to alter the course of one's life. And in my case did so. Thus it is when the passive individual decides to act, he who through all eternity has been the under dog. Such is the action of the runaway thrall.

But life goes on. By comparison, I am led to believe that I am possessed of a greater capacity for happiness than most people. During the past fifteen years I have often found myself extremely happy. I am able to absorb myself completely in the business of living, so that past events are powerless to crowd their way in and dominate my conscious thought. I live my way clean through things. What is this faculty? For, of course, it has not always been like this with me. Before Misery Harbour I experienced long periods

of apathy... This was, likely enough, the result of a dominant characteristic.

Apathy — what was that? It was slumbering hatred. I have seriously believed that I did not know the meaning of hatred ... though it would seem that I have experienced no other emotion save that of hatred. Therefore the picture I am giving you of Jante is both one-sided and badly distorted; nevertheless, viewed from the needlepoint whereon I stand and from this single point of vantage alone, it is accurate, true to its innermost core and fiber. Here I sit and am the living proof: the scorpion born and bred in Jante. Such am I, and I come from Jante.

There is no such thing as good memory or poor memory, in the sense we commonly employ. But some persons make use of their memory, where others do not. It is a question of choice of weapons in the struggle for existence. Often you will hear the expression: “If only I could forget it!” This desire is most virile during childhood and youth, when so many of life’s elements are associated with a feeling of shame. Dynamic shame, one might almost say. It is the will to forget that is responsible for conservatism. The man of excellent memory, so-called, becomes your revolutionary. He who clearly recalls his childhood develops a hatred for those who have forgotten theirs, for he realizes that this betokens tragedy for other little ones.

# FRIENDSHIP

I HAVE gone back into my own past along several lanes of memory. One of these was my memory of divers friendships I had experienced. For I was early aware that John Wakefield led backward to old friends and forward to new.

In friendship I have always been the weaker party. I have already told you how it was in certain friendships of my childhood, and conditions were generally the same in those I experienced later on. I was forever demanding too much of my friends for the purpose of determining whether they cared for me enough. In but one friendship was there ever any sort of balance achieved. That was

my relationship to Eivind Harre.

It is strange that I have not mentioned him before. It is so strange that I am lost in deep amazement over my lapse. No man except my father ever came so close to my heart as did Eivind. We met in our fourteenth year, an age when friendships are cemented. No vast degree of intimacy, however, existed between us at that time. Since then I have perceived that we were equally fond of each other and equally reserved. But each of us remembered the other, and chance decreed that we should meet in England ten years later, both on our way home from Canada. This was singular indeed. He had come by way of Southampton, I by way of Liverpool, and there we suddenly came face to face in Trafalgar Square in London, exactly as though it had been in Jante. You ought to have seen our joy!

Of chief significance in the present account is the effect of this friendship in its early stages. For a long time I circled about before venturing to approach him. But after the feat had been accomplished, we promptly became inseparable and had many a frolic together. We were large for our age and could obtain beer in out-of-the-way saloons where bar-keepers were none too careful to observe the law. Despite the emphatic injunction from home, it was anyway easier to drink than to talk with girls. We laid great plans for the future, with particular reference to travel. Our only food for disagreement was the fact that Eivind desired to go south, whereas I preferred to go north. It was mainly temperature that divided us on this point. Eivind had a passion for hot weather, which always brought me nausea and pains in my eyes. But with the greatest of caution we avoided open strife. Never have we exchanged a harsh word, either then or to this day. At all events, this question of temperature proved really significant. His first voyage took him to South Africa, mine to Iceland. Later, with few exceptions, we each held to our proper hemisphere. The sea offered us our only possibility of travel, but even aboard ship we made our respective choice of heat and cold: Eivind shipped in steam, I in sail.

Ours was a pathetic friendship during boyhood, and perhaps so even later on. Never could two youngsters have conversed with each other with greater discretion. On my side, however, lurking behind my affection, lay a murder-wish which quite often upset me

considerably. This came as the result of a series of obscure daydreams to the effect that when two people were as fond of each other as Eivind and I were, death alone should seal the tie in order that nothing might come between us to ruin the relationship. Later, in my earliest love-affairs, these same fancies re-appeared in my mind. Every relationship I have ever experienced was both introduced and concluded with a murder-wish. I do not know with certainty when this complex dissolved in my mind; perhaps I Harbour it still, though I have become too experienced to waste time dwelling upon it.

My friendships with men found their bloody expression in the murder of John. But I did not know this and there-fore I continued to take risks. It is for this reason that I prefer to dwell more fully upon my relationship with Eivind rather than upon that which lay before Misery Harbour.

One does not know how much one says about oneself and how much one gives away with a single word. Much of what a man relates about himself he really knows nothing about. I sincerely trust that I am saying more than I know. For my temporary religion demands that all shall be told which, to my own knowledge, bears in any way upon Misery Harbour.

We flaunt our manly ideals without suspecting that the man who achieves his ideal is compelled to murder his own friends. These manly ideals we erect for the purpose of making up for what we are not.

Eivind hated his father. The reasons he gave for this were always more or less obscure. Of his mother he spoke with deepest reverence. He made such a thorough failure of his life as is possible only in the case of a mother's son.

He was tall and muscular and extremely handsome, but he would stammer when angry, and in a state of inebriation he would soon lose entirely his power of speech, owing to the blood deserting the lower part of his face, which would become cold and white. I was distressed that Eivind should have such a defect; I was always afraid lest someone should discover it.

He possessed what people term courage. He was fond of attacking those who were larger and stronger than himself. Once after a boxing match held in a certain club, Eivind and I were standing by the outer door when the champion made his exit. Quite unexpectedly Eivind slugged the man, who at once went down with a bang. The affair was utterly senseless, for the two men were total strangers. Eivind waited for the pugilist to rise to his feet, then asked him if he cared for more. Did he perhaps agine he was something?

The battle did not last more than a few seconds, and this time it was Eivind who lay sprawled in the doorway, his mouth full of blood and loose teeth. Afterwards he laughed about the affair and declared it had been a double victory: “First I won, then he did.”

For ten years Eivind knocked about the world, visiting the most exotic places he could find. At length he turned homeward, and on the way his path crossed mine in London. He came to live with us for a time, maintaining a tolerably quiet existence, though by himself he drank considerably. He set out again and remained away for three years. Upon his return he found me keeping house alone, for Gjatrid and the children had gone to the country. I soon joined her, leaving Eivind in charge of the house. He had slipped a peg still lower, was drinking more than ever, and had lost his last illusion.

When we returned home, we found he had left, but not before he had sold a good share of our worldly goods and left behind seventy-five empty bottles in compensation. Poor chap! I managed to learn his address and sent him a good-natured joshing letter which he was inordinately happy to receive. Soon afterwards he disappeared...

I no longer know where Eivind is. But often, very often, I think of him, and the day will surely never come when Eivind Harre, showing his face again, will not be given the place of honor at my table. Whenever I think of him, I feel secretly ashamed of myself. I know how fine a line divided us; you see, we had been almost one and I realize this only too well when I consider my relationship to Eivind. Always as a boy I had held to the belief that he would somehow amount to something in this world, whereas for myself there had been little hope. He and it might just as well have been

myself.

Yes, you see, I placed him on a pedestal at too dizzy a height. Only six months ago I attended a banquet which degenerated into a brawl — all because I had met there a tall and muscular fellow whose name had likewise been Eivind. I lost no time in getting into a wrangle and finally came to blows with the man, entirely without occasion.

I said before that at the time we were fourteen years old it had been easier for us to drink than to talk with girls. Well, such was the case with me. Eivind, as a matter of fact, was venturesome in both respects. He was one of those Jante boys who were to no great extent girl-shy.

Then, when we became fifteen, I fell in love with a girl whose name was Martha. I would dream at night about Martha, and many a lyrical flight did I breathe to myself on the subject of Martha. Farther than this I had been unable to press the affair.

But Eivind, you see, was no lyricist and absolutely never gave way to elegy. And when he, too, began casting eyes at Martha, I had nothing to do but lay down my cards. Already at that early age Eivind was having no end of girls. But all seemed to leave him with a sense of disappointment. The last time I saw him he had yet failed to experience romantic love.

One evening I saw him together with Martha. I may say that this in no way damaged our friendship. It would seem that joy and pain are as closely related as are love and hatred.

A number of years later I was on my way through a certain village. There I saw Martha again and recognized her. I therefore decided to stay awhile.

That evening on the street I met Eivind. I had thought he was off in Odessa.

# LEONORA AND

# LATTERFROSKEN

EIVIND was a solace to me, though, of course, I found him all too immature. He was several months older than I and the fact was I envied him this advantage. As he was never to know of this, I would spend my evenings with Latterfrosken. Even so, Eivind learned of it one day with amazement written all over his face. Whereupon I felt both small and big.

Leonora was a girl of my own age. She kept house for my employer. She was a plump lass, well developed for her age. Long before confirmation, stories about her had gone the rounds; she was deeply involved with certain sea-faring men. But she was attractive and was another with whom I fell in love. One winter evening she invited me to accompany her into the woods. It was cold, but off we went together. Though I shivered, it was not from the cold. Not ten words was I able to utter. The next morning I dared not even glance in her direction. She, however, called after me a cheery good-morning and laughed. It was frightful. But I continued for a long time to cherish a secret hope, though at length it collapsed. Latterfrosken threw himself at her feet, an attitude I could never fully understand in this chap, who, according to his own account, could have had his pick of the daughters of quality folk. I would go for long jaunts with Latterfrosken, during which he would unfold to me in detail the precise words Leonora had addressed to him and just what he had said in reply. John Wakefield was a handsome man; he was indeed, but his caricature is Latterfrosken. It is John I have portrayed for you in the character of Latterfrosken — his eyes, his odious mouth.

It is probable that we never do other than repeat what others have done before us, and each repetition is the subject of another, the same acts over and over again in elaborate combination. There probably exists in the world but a limited number of accomplishable actions and these are the ones we perform. We are forced to stop right there, and when we become acutely aware of this situation, the concept of independence quite naturally tends to disappear. Possibilities may be combined, but the final combination has probably already been achieved.

# THE MARK OF CAIN

THESE circumstances were for a long time extremely repulsive to me. I took refuge in friendships of a preposterous nature, because of a suppressed desire for love. When, some years ago, this faintly dawned upon my mind, I hastened to screw down the lid again. But the situation was not to be put down. I view it all serenely now; that is, in so far as my mind is capable of serenity. For, of course, my life is an ever-burning fever. Present knowledge is never enough to satisfy me; my brain is continually in quest of the cause behind the cause. I know that many times you have been astonished, as I myself have been on fairly frequent occasions, that I should devote myself so unceasingly to these miserable Jante destinies. What is Jante to me? I have fled into an eternity, but always with the weight of Jante balanced upon my brow, and were you now to cut open my heart, in all likelihood you would find Jante there as well. But I am a cosmos-builder and thus far I have completed no more than the torso. I must go on. Otherwise I suppose it would be better to desert my workshop, to go off on a joyous holiday, to see more of the world than I have already seen. Somehow to see all that everyone else has seen... No, not that, if only to go back and see something which I myself have seen before — to be once again a gentleman, sojourning awhile in London.

Ah yes, it was along these or somewhat similar lines my thoughts travelled as I stood with one foot in the crucible of self-reduction, my whole will aching for escape, as was characteristic of me then. But no longer so today. I have at last conquered myself and entered the brimstone bath, whence I shall not emerge until I have reduced myself down to a child again and can see.

# I LOVED THE ONE I HATED MOST

IT is obvious to me that, as a youngster, I was in love with Fröken Nibe. It would displease me each time one of the masters came in to exchange a few words with her. Nothing they said would escape my

ears, and there was one master in particular whom I hated, only because he had given her a mirror for her birthday. It was a happy event for me when he was transferred to another town far away from Jante. My favorite thought was that of cutting her in two at the waist and of severing her arms and head. Her rounded torso I would hide away somewhere just in order to have it.

It came as a catastrophe when a boy named Vilfred Kraakevinge subjected her to violence. He struck Fröken Nibe. Perhaps she had deserved it, but it wounded Inc deeply and I was on the verge of tears every time I remembered it.

The affair was an outgrowth of Fröken Nibe's desire for cleanliness. She would warn us a full day in advance whoever she planned to hold inspection. Then she would pass down the aisles and scrutinize hands and ears. She would never fail to be cross with me over the blackness of my nails. There were many of us whom she would scold for this condition, and all would be ordered to make a better job of it the following day. But, as the next day saw no improvement, Fröken Nibe would be even more furious than before and would mete out a general tweaking of ears because we were so stubborn and disobedient. Though I would scour my nails until I wore the skin from my fingers, success never rewarded my efforts. She would look at my nails, flush, and immediately give me a whack. How I hated her!

Vilfred Kraakevinge received the same treatment, but he was not like the rest of us; he was a foreigner, having arrived with his parents from Hamburg a year or two before. One day when we were again parading our nails and Fröken Nibe had paused to reprimand him, he did not assume the hang-dog expression we were accustomed to observe on the face of a boy, that expression to which Fröken Nibe was equally accustomed. Instead, he glared back at her indignantly and our hearts all stopped beating with terror. Fröken Nibe must likewise have felt somewhat uneasy, for she turned away from Vilfred without pausing to tweak his ear. At that, Vilfred's fist shot out and caught her in the back. The blow was delivered with full force and Vilfred was strong of arm. Fröken Nibe gasped and tottered; she turned and looked at Vilfred, her eyes wild with fear and pain. Vilfred sat silently chewing on something, his

entire expression one of freezing hate. Fröken Nibe walked slowly up to the platform and sat down. I was on the point of sobbing aloud. Vilfred sat there with his hard jaws chewing nervously and his eyes following every move she made with their inflexible, merciless hatred. She did not venture to glance in his direction. Within me it was as though a mountain had toppled from the sky down into an innocent little pond. I doubt that in any other relationship during my entire life have love and hatred been so closely intertwined as in my relationship to Fröken Nibe.

Long afterwards — many years later, it was — I at length discovered what had really been wrong with those nails of ours, and that, so help me, Fröken Nibe had been in the right. Whenever she whipped me, I would stare down at my nails and be at a loss to understand what had come over her. There must surely have been some magic involved in the matter of fingernails. The explanation is simple: it did not occur to a half-awake Jante boy that nails may be cleansed underneath! If Fröken Nibe had simply told us this, there would have been one mystery less in the world.

It was not a popular custom to do anything of this sort. A girl was acquainted with a store clerk, but she did not particularly care for him, for he was repulsive in one respect — his nails were white where they ought to have been black.

I understand her. There was something perverse about Fröken Nibe's fingers, too, though I was not fully aware of what it really was.

In a ball-room in Jante a girl had got a black spot on the back of her white frock. She clutched her partner's hand, looked at it, and said, with annoyance: "Why, it's exactly as black as my toes!"

The comparison was in no way extravagant. It was not customary for people to wash their feet. This I attribute to the shocking manner of undressing for the night in Jante. The inadvertent bathing of one's body stopped when one became old enough and sensible enough to cease jumping into the fiord like a little boy. Often a lady will say: "I shall wash myself for low neck this evening."

Here is an experience I once had aboard ship. We were sitting about, enjoying ourselves to an unusual degree, talking behind a certain person's back, when someone suddenly put in: "Well, at any rate, he's cleanly!" "Yes," another cried, "I'll say he is! He washes between his legs every night of his life!"

We stared for a time, face to face with the inconceivable. At length a third found the right word to break the spell. With loathing in his voice, he said: "Such a pig! "…

Vilfred Kraakevinge's treatment of Fröken Nibe made a neverto-be-forgotten impression upon me. That boy had been so utterly unrepressed that I was completely overwhelmed; it was like a sudden supply of air when one is on the point of suffocation. Nor had he been given to such actions, as a rule; on this one occasion his action had been entirely justified, for Fröken Nibe had undertaken to persecute us, owing to her own ignorance. Vilfred had gradually lost control of his temper under fire of all this incomprehensible talk about filthy nails; fists are youth's first line of defence, and at length he struck out. Always with healthy directness of purpose Vilfred would proceed toward his goal; he always declined to beat about the bush, whereas we others were always writhing like worms. His questions addressed to his elders were always direct; he would continue to look them straight in the eye, without batting an eyelash, until the answer came.

We did not like this in him. He was a foreigner. Nevertheless, we were compelled to respect him. He was as free from taking sides with the teachers as he was from sharing our malice. He knew how to take a good-natured joke and was apparently not greatly hampered by the half-German language he spoke. He was a good sport about the nickname we had given him, which was a corruption of the German name he bore. And that was almost the most striking thing about him. Our own nicknames never failed to enrage us. With no one did he ever become bosom friends; he lacked the urge for psychological entanglements. As it happened, his attack upon Fröken Nibe attracted me to him. I hovered about Vilfred, more than anything else in the manner of a dog seeking forgiveness. I joined him on the streets and talked with him in school whenever the opportunity presented itself. He was as good-

natured and cool toward me as he was toward all the others — always the same. This led me on; once I attempted to prove my friendship, by giving him several trifles. Surprised, he asked me why — but, of course, if I wanted to, why, all right. That was all. I flattered him, but he ignored my efforts. I hinted to him that we really ought to be close friends. He whistled and received my suggestion indifferently. He was like glass, hard, smooth, and self-satisfied.

I gave him up. He was the unattainable. And he had struck Fröken Nibe. I did not like him.

# THE TRIANGLE WOULD NOT COME TO LIFE AGAIN

EIGHT years ago I encountered a similar situation, the last I recall of its kind.

Considering my comparatively mature age at the time, it is natural that there should have been a girl in it. Her name was Leonora. The first Leonora was fat and blonde. The later Leonora was slim and dark. She was an actress and we called her Swarthy Leonora. I met her at a drinking party and worshipped her for more than a month. Our relationship turned out to be a flabby affair, at best. For reasons I have never been able to identify, I had taken it into my head that I should like to love her. But I was never in the least successful. She had a lover who was quite young, hardly more than eighteen, and he was always threatening to shoot himself. It came over me that I too should like to shoot myself and I would often spend an evening polishing up my revolver. Up until three or four years ago I had always carried a revolver.

We are always prompt to admire the person who is loved, because we ourselves are not loved or because we do not believe that we are. The one who was loved was bound to be in possession of excellent qualities I lacked, even if it happened to be Latterfrosken, the fallen soul. We love Father because Mother loves him, and vice versa. That is the whole bitter story of the triangle, and I murdered

John Wakefield because he refused to accept it. That he refused likewise indicates the contrary. Life is no less involved than that. I killed him because he did not love me, and because I did love him and did not want to, and because he did.

# THE BLOODY TRIANGLE

THE calamity in Misery Harbour was the conclusion of an old family tragedy, the most powerful attempt I ever made to give the world the appearance I wished it to have. If you think my story has been pitiful thus far, for Heaven's sake, tell me to stop. For it is to become even more pitiful.

I was seventeen. Her name was Eve and I loved her as ardently as only the ignorant man can love. It was at a time when I considered myself in every way a man. I had done things which were in no way ordinary. Contrary to all philosophy and everything I know about myself: It was a feat to desert a ship on an October night in the open sea, perhaps five miles from an unknown naked rocky coast. From pain and defeat I had tumbled headlong fair in the Midst of something almost fabulous. No one knew me. No living soul could point a finger at me and say: "maybe you don't think I know something about you?"

I take a forward leap: You have possibly been wondering to yourself why I remained so long a victim of that infamous magic from Jante and trembled at the sound of this "Maybe you don't think — ?" If so, you must bear in mind the bloody nourishment that menacing question received after Misery Harbour. I was then in the claws of Jante as I had never been before, and a menacing insinuation which otherwise might after a time have lost its effectiveness suddenly became as real as a bolt of lightning. Moreover, I do not believe that such an insinuation can ever cease to be effective. It remains a menace for the very reason that one does not associate it with definite deeds, and that, as a general rule, one has a tendency to suspect oneself of a little of everything. It appeared, when I was impelled to examine my deed, that I had been striving to rid myself of dread, although in reality I had thereby created positive grounds for dread. But during the first years the result was that the menace

was also given a back-ground in the new place where the sailor stepped ashore. I have not told you of the weapon generally employed by a person in Jante against whom an accusation has been directed. We would say: “You’re probably the same yourself!”

But that had no sting, as it were. It never does to be on the defensive. The one who strikes the first blow will nearly always be recognized by both parties as the master of the situation.

I may as well tell you at this point that naturally there are a whole series of things concerning John Wakefield which will never be mentioned in this connection. You who have heard as much as you have will nevertheless be quite unable to expose me. No one can. You must not construe this as lack of confidence; it is, in simple effect, a quite rational attitude I take toward you.

*See* here, I must show you something ... here in my wallet I have a sketch of an island, done in pencil and later traced in ink. It is Newfoundland. Underneath, in a large childish hand, the name: John Wakefield.

He made this sketch. It is well executed. It was done one day when he desired to explain to me the location of a little village we were discussing. See, there it lies and its name is Quidi Vidi, a little settlement of a handful of fishermen. John was unable to write anything more than his name... Oh my, no! You need not think for a minute that he was from Quidi Vidi!…

I have told you that I have never survived the affair, never outlived its haunting effects. But this much, at least — it lies deep in the past. Much has happened since I fled from Misery Harbour. But I am unable to put myself in a better light by concocting something to the effect that he would, in any event, have died shortly, since, for example, he was the victim of a disease. Nothing had been the matter with him. Nor can I make him out a rascal, either; God alone knows whether or not he was that. He was a Jante person, a great coarse Jante man, though, of course, there is no death penalty for being just that. The world is filled with Jante men. But, as I said, time has passed, each day giving rise to fresh exigencies, and to the extent that I am reconciled to my family, I am reconciled to John Wakefield as well. This may sound odd, for I appear as the sole

party to the reconciliation. John lies where he lies, and my family I no longer know very much about. But the only possible form of reconciliation is certainly that which involves but one party the form in which people are politely emphatic in not giving a damn for each other… But this is a poor arrangement.

When something is beyond repair, it must be put aside. Justice, as you know, is utterly ineffectual; it multiplies what has happened by two and washes its hands.

Good heavens, this is simply to flee the question! But I have halted my flight. It is the facts themselves I am determined to present, and not so much the philosophy which may be erected upon them.

It is the sacred number three which has residence in Adamsen's barn. And everything I have reported to you herein, from Vilfred Kraakevinge through John to Swarthy Leonora, is the fire above Adamsen's barn. It is my childhood to the fore again; it is my attempt to realize the impossible.

I no longer demand this realization. I have reached the point now where I no longer feel it necessary to go about with a revolver in my pocket. I am aware of my own strength. It is possible that this is all too slight. Certainly it is no deciding factor. The main thing is that I am fully conscious of its existence, its scope and method. There is no longer any need to visit Adamsen's barn; there is no longer any need of either a heaven or a hell. For I have reached the point where I can pass both men and women coldly by; I have reached the point from which the world can be moved...

Obviously this is untrue! But the feeling behind my words, that is genuine, that is veracity. There are a great many stupidities I shall still commit, never fear. But somewhere within me there lies a vast coldness, a huge and naked comprehension. When something is comprehended, it may sometimes appear in rather strange disguise. Here is the disguise of my own realization, or perhaps but one of its many disguises: I am no longer afraid of women and am therefore able to do without them. Sexual desire is merely impotence. Obviously this is like-wise untrue, but it is only twenty-five per cent false.

# HOME

ALL evening long out here I have been watching the lowhanging heavens clouded with rain, like a great sleeping face bending over the world. It is the face of a man, but I am not certain whose it is, possibly because it is not clearly the face of one single man. Mostly it is the face of one whose name was Walter Shece. Once, at a time when I was obliged to seek seclusion, he offered me his hospitality. I had money, but he would accept no remuneration. And I lived in his house like a son, and every night his daughter would visit my room to see if I needed anything. Every evening she would visit me after I had gone to bed, and always at such times her voice would be unsteady. But there were only two rooms in the house, and in the other slept her father, a young boy, and she.

The days passed and Shece was most pleasant to me. During the day I would perform odd jobs for him, and in the evening we would play cards. The devil never fails to break loose in me whenever I have cards in my hands. But here there was no danger, for we were only playing for fun, with matches for stakes. There was also the fact, of course, that I was a guest in the home, a man hiding from the world. I could hardly say that I did not care to play cards. And the girl, she was beautiful, and she would sit and look on. She was between eighteen and twenty. One night, after I had gone to bed, she entered to inquire if there were anything I needed. We smiled to each other and exchanged a few words — it went no farther than that, for I was the guest of her father, and he was in bed in the adjoining room.

But after several days had passed, Walter Shece began to develop an attitude of jocosity in the course of the evening. He would tease his daughter for being of a marriageable age and would come right out and declare that I was a fairly good-looking lad. I was embarrassed, for his statement was decidedly in error.

Several more days passed and I was no longer sure what I might venture to believe. Shece continued to tease us and would utter some strange remarks upon my leaving the room to retire. I clasped Ishbel in my arms one evening when she came to me with a cup of

water. And she sat down on the bed beside me. But her father was no farther away than the sound of his breathing, which reached my ears. The following evening Ishbel closed the door tight after her and gave no evidence of intending to leave my room that night. There was a flaming red spot beneath one of her eyes. She stayed with me. The following morning Shece gave me a friendly pat on the shoulder. This he did two or three mornings in succession, but then he became incalculable and often rather peevish. I was disposed to take fright on the slightest provocation, and the first time he berated me in earnest over some inconsequential matter, I fled from his house. That was a pity. Ishbel was the strangest girl imaginable and exceedingly lovely. It was only that she was dark and I did not care for brunettes. Women must be blonde to please me; their hair may be even a bit reddish in tint, but never black.

Since there is nothing particularly hazardous about women, and since in the course of time I have been friendly with an indiscreet number, it is really a pity that I have always been afraid of the fair sex. But such was the case. I have, on occasion, been successful in masking my fear, but, even so, I would always flee in ample time lest it should be discovered that I was afraid. This gave me the reputation of being brutal and ruthless, a reputation from which I have derived much comfort. Is it possible that some day we may discover something in regard to the true nature of brutality?

# DARKNESS IN THE BARN

ONCE I experienced fear in a major sense, and now I must relate the incident to you. It was May, in the neighborhood of Cartagena, but the nights were bitterly cold. One evening I came upon a huge pile of some kind of straw — I do not know exactly what it was, but it resembled a stack of dried pea-stalks. There was a farm-house near by, so I waited until it was fully dark before I walked over and began burrowing my way into the stack. At length I found a kind of tunnel and began following this along. But suddenly my hands touched something alive and I heard the sound of breathing. Neither of us uttered a word and, I confess, I myself felt anything but brave. Some minutes passed, and then I felt a hand on my face. “I shall be strangled!” the thought darted through my mind, and I

had no wish to be strangled. With a shriek of terror I flung myself on top of the other, who also emitted a screech and began begging for mercy in a language which may perhaps have been Spanish. It turned out to be a young woman. We attempted to converse, but neither of us could understand a single word the other spoke. After all, this was no life-and-death matter, and at length we slept. In the morning I felt rather insecure and ill at ease. It had been as you can well understand, a night somewhat out of the ordinary, and really it was now quite distressing that we could neither talk nor see. So, without further ado, I began crawling backward out through the passage. She followed along after me. I fell as I emerged from the stack and, sitting there on my haunches, I peered with much interest into the aperture for a first glimpse of my recent bed fellow. Ah, there was her face. She was a Negress.

I may tell you — well — good heavens! What is there for me to say? Here words lose all effect, salt its tang, and the sun stood still upon Gibeon. I have no special prejudice against Negroes. I have no knowledge relating to problems of race — but here I stood quite unexpectedly face to face with one of them. Nor did I solve it. I chose my usual course of action and fled!

# THE ART OF LIMITATION

ONE refers to the art of limitation. As you perceive, it is hardly this art I practice. Limitation is the art of a fakir, the ability to remain inside the line drawn about the hen, the logical chalk-line which swallows its own tail, with the hen held a prisoner within. But this is no novel, and if any composition results from it, that has not been my conscious intention. It is not my design that what I tell you shall in itself constitute a cosmos. It is but a tool in my hand to aid me in bringing my own cosmos to completion. Keeping pace with the words which flow from my pen, I see more and more deeply into myself, and I by no means vouch for all I have said thus far. It is conceivable that were I to repeat what I have already told you, I should be unable to do so in the same way, but would start out from another point and proceed to tell you, night after night, my reasons for not murdering, for example, Skyldfri Sidenius. You may rest assured that that would be more astounding and more exciting

than the fact that I did actually murder John Wakefield…

That would not, however, have been such a poor angle of approach. I ought to have cut loose with the knife on several others and am to be condemned more for having limited myself to a single individual. However, this is all but pleasant theory. If there be anything at all certain in his world, it is that I have covered enough ground with this one. Such theories make the tiresome mistake of assuming the existence of a superman with the power of life and death over others, and from such a role I really must beg to be excused. Even if I were to possess such a power, I should still refrain from taking any decisive action in regard to Skyldfri Sidenius.

# AT HOME IN ADAMSEN'S BARN

I BROUGHT up this question of limitation mainly because I found I had talked myself away from the subject of Ishbel and Walter Shece. Seldom have I ever enjoyed life as I did there with them, and very likely I should have married Ishbel, had only the old man not insinuated that this was really his dream. With them I felt at home; for a day or two the old Khan had granted me my inalienable right — but afterwards had regretted it. How do I know? The first morning he patted me on the shoulder, while Ishbel stood warm and glowing in the kitchen, my head had begun buzzing with great plans —we should have new drying-grounds for fish, and better outbuildings. No, it would not be long before Shece and I should own our own schooner; we could never get along with the small share-earnings which were his at the time.

My schemes could not have irked him, for I never breathed a word of them to him. But it is possible, of course, that I put on too bold a front before him. I do not le believe this, however. It was he himself who played the entire comedy. The Lord gave, the Lord took away; praised be the name of the Lord!

But now I know that in the home of Walter Shece I had come for a short time into Adamsen's barn; it was warm and homely and it was not on fire. God and the Devil had split through the middle and had

become two entities again, but two gods, in fact, and I myself was one of them and had Ishbel. That was my share in the arrangement. I wonder how the whole thing would have appeared to Shece had he ever taught himself to think. But this he had never done. He managed only to act in part along lines of which we are capable, regardless of any ability to think — his was a faint approach to established religion, unavoidable when three find themselves living together under the same roof.

# SALVATION

I AM having, as I sit here, a remarkable experience. It is, as it were, in sharp conflict with all I have been conscious of for many years. You see, that tragedy in Misery Harbour has never been given a definite location in the flow of time as have all other events. Most experiences have a tendency to condense and fade out with the passage of time. We look at the past through a reversed spyglass. John's death had never reduced itself in this manner. Often it seemed of as recent occurrence as a tragedy which took place last night. Never has it seemed truly remote... save at times when I have been able to forget him completely. But even then, in some devilish manner, he seemed somehow closer at hand than he ought...

Yes, this is indeed strange. For the first time since he died, I see him far down in the depths of a gray Past, in another world, and there is the effect of many years having passed ... seventeen years — yes, seventeen. Seventeen years led up to him, and seventeen years have led away from him. I have devoted to that creature the first thirty-four years of my life, and that surely must be enough. No Dante man will say I am right in this, for I have, of course, successfully negotiated other problems and have supported a family fairly well. And more than this no Jante man has ever done. His life shows no surplus. My surplus is on deposit in Misery Harbour.

I said something before on the subject of composition. It seems to me, for my own part, that I have at this very point reached a damnably good ending for shall we say, this novel? The interesting protagonist has attained his end. In sober fact, John Wakefield now lies dead in Misery Harbour.

But this is life and not a novel. Life delights in putting in the middle those things which novelists all agree to consider as conclusions. It is conceivable that the conclusion really will be something other — an unexpected ending, perhaps having nothing at all to do with John, who knows? Then, too, there is the further possibility that he cannot be kept in his grave, that he will later return to haunt me, though I hardly believe he will. For this is an entirely new sensation. Never before has he seemed so fully a part of my past…

It is quite possible that you will consider my story as continually the same. I am always hovering about the same people, always with the same form of expression. But for me life will be, from this night on, something different, my story a different tale. I am reporting a closed epoch. The fugitive crossed his own main trail when he broached the holy triangle, and the fire in Adamsen's barn has burned itself out.

# THE CORTÈGE TO MISERY HARBOUR

A FUNERAL procession is bound for Misery Harbour this night. I see them bearing John Wakefield thence and all are agreed on the manner of bearing the coffin; no one is tramping on another's toes. Some have their shoulders beneath the coffin, others contribute a hand-grasp; some of them I but faintly recall. In the darkness about the coffin I see Petrus, Janus, and Einer Arnakke; I see Vilfred Kraakevinge, Swarthy Leonora, and Latterfrosken. But they halt rather frequently to exchange corpses. Now John must step down and lend a hand, while Eivind Harre takes his place in the coffin. And then they shift again; I see them bearing Father to Misery Harbour. With heavy steps they move along. And now they are carrying Fröken Nibe. And it is something of *myself* they are likewise bearing to the grave, Latterfrosken, my detested *alter ego*. But I am most particularly conscious of this phenomenon when they are carrying Eivind Harre. And it develops into a tremendous funeral tonight far off in Misery Harbour, where they will bury one for all, and all for one. Here lies the youth of Espen Arnakke...

John Wakefield belonged to a type often encountered off there along the coasts — a fisherman during the summer, a lumberjack during the winter, with an occasional job in between. He was illiterate. In a logging camp where I worked, thirty men out of the fifty employed there were illiterate, so that it does not appear that the older generation experienced much in the way of schooling in that part of the world. But all the younger men could read and write, and it was these who wrote love-letters for the others.

Just such a vagabond was he. Often you will find such persons presented in a romantic light, in books and on the screen. But they really bear not the slightest trace of romanticism in the feminine sense. They are Jante men.

You see, it was no easy matter when I met John in Misery Harbour. For I had met him before. This I have never told anyone until now, but we had been together in the same logging camp in a place called Harewood. Foreigners do not, as a rule, come to such places and therefore I was considered as something of a curiosity. This was one more score later to be avenged, and it was not exactly as friends that John and I parted company in Twilling-gate along the northern coast a few days before Christmas. And as fate would have it, we met again in Misery Harbour. You understand that to meet someone who knew me was like meeting a man from Jante. John persisted in persecuting me from the very first day he saw me again. Poison lurked in every word that he uttered. The rest of the story you have already heard elsewhere; there is little to be added to it and nothing to be subtracted.

But out on the Atlantic a cortège is making its hasty way grey shades on their way to Misery Harbour.

# OLD DUG-OUTS

IN the course of time I have attempted, in one way or another, to liberate myself from the memory. The first attempt — namely, my desire to forget the whole affair — was dictated by Jante. Those who wished us well there would always say, of some troublesome circumstance: “Try to forget it!” This shows that the human being’s

ability to forget all the worst things he has done is pretty generally realized, even by those most eager to deny the correctness of the principle. But “forgetfulness” is fraught with grave danger; it indicates that one is storing up explosives. That forgetfulness as such betokens just this, I have been aware since boyhood.

The next attempt was to a greater extent tinged with religion. I began to repeat the first murder. Well, no, I had had enough of the first, but in fancy I kept on repeating and repeating. I murdered people by the dozen. My explanation of this may perhaps sound a bit amusing, but you must, of course, remember that such mental activities are not based upon proved ideas. It is the child within us that is defending itself through us, but it leads us far astray.

It was long ago, you understand, that I clung to the thought that I was not the sole murderer of John Wakefield, though I still believe that in this I have always been correct. He himself was an accessory to the crime and I was guilty no more and no less than were all those who had made me what I was. If no one had put in place the pyramid’s lowermost stones, there would be no one to have fitted into place the crowning block. You see something similar to this in the field of technical invention. The great and renowned men are those who have crowned the pyramid. It was a greater and a more fundamental task to calculate that the earth is round than it was to evolve the theory of relativity several centuries later. Viewing its origin and development, the latter is no more than the dot over an i. When we hail the great inventors and hang murderers on the end of a rope, these are only protests against our growth. The inventor is great’ the murderer is evil. Growth and presumption we persecute with fire and sword. The worst expression of this is in our making the child the quarry in a well-organized hunting expedition.

But, as I was saying — I desired to save myself through the commission of many murders. This is the somewhat amusing obverse side of my thought to apportion my ultimate blood-guilt to many who stood before me. In some region of my mind the notion developed that my guilt diminished in ratio to the number of people I murdered. There was little to be found in the way of fine logic in my mental processes, were this to be measured according to the sacred chalk-line or recognized psychology. But if the hen of the

chalk-line were to enter the circles of criminal law, she would soon discover that justice in many lands clears the case of a murder by taking an additional life. Perhaps the thought has been gnawing away at me that, in a small way, I might take it up as a trade. It is the beginning that is difficult! But seriously speaking: the sense of guilt doubtless could not have become greater than it already was, and when I realized that the world is ever changing, I began to hope that in time my guilt might tend to diminish. Obviously you must consider that it is a rather ruthless attitude toward human life in the interests of myself. However, I assure you that I hold human life in deepest reverence and I doubt you will discover many who have erected such bullet-proof barricades against murder as I have done. I can think up any number of circumstances under which I would perhaps commit homicide, but these are only circumstances such as would drive any normal, reasonable man to murder.

Forgetfulness, repetition, explanation. It was the third expedient that proved the correct one.

When I say that a desire for forgetfulness was the first to make itself felt, the statement is not entirely correct. The first few days directly after the event I was so close to the truth that it did not occur to me until some fifteen years later. I was only a boy, but the human being is sagacious when faced by dire necessity. Later, as my distress diminished, quite automatically I became more stupid.

I have mentioned before the deserted logging camp where I spent a night during my flight from Misery Harbour. A log cabin, you would probably call it. So many strange things happened there that a bible could be filled with a record of them, a long and steaming book of revelation. It was there, too, that I conjured up in my mind a repetition of the murder; not an act committed against anyone else, no: a repetition of my murder of John Wakefield. I was afraid of the dead and was ready to slay his ghost. You see, the desire for repetition becomes quite rational when cast in this form, which was its original. But the seventeenyear-old boy achieved even greater profundity that night than the mere impossible desire for repetition. Something seemed to happen to him; a will pressed something into his brain which said: *You shall remember that you have been a child. You shall remember Fairyland in order that you may find your*

*justification and come through this thing alive!*

I turned traitor exactly one week later. And the three blind years followed, during which time I lived as a somnambulist and tried to forget and did so and became a distinguished man and fostered the notion of mounting the pulpit. But down beneath my forgetfulness a true fiendishness was girding up its loins and I did some wicked things during that period, betrayed little girls with elegiac lies and was charming, oh, so charming! Then came the explosion. Whether from an overload of high explosives or whatever it may have been. And the rest is a grand interregnum.

# DEATH AND DISTANCE

I TAKE it for granted that John desired Eve because he could see that I was in love with her, though it is possible he wanted her for her own sake...

You see, I was filled with a fierce and ardent regard for that girl and I have often wondered if I might not have persisted in my affection for her had not such turbulent events thrust themselves between us. Countless letters I have composed to her, only to burn them in the white light of the following day. Naturally, it was out of the question to think of actually mailing her a letter; moreover, her last name I had never learned. But I wonder if a few years ago, when I found myself in the vicinity of Misery Harbour, my thoughts had dwelt half as much upon him as upon her? I cannot say. But I know that in almost seven-teen years Eve has established herself in my relationship to John in a manner to defy analysis. When, in the throes of a nightmare, I have felt his leaden weight upon me, it has always been to her I have cried out my anguish. Or I may have dreamed of going for long walks with my good friend John, who was totally unaware that Eve lay murdered far off in Misery Harbour.

I was driven out of Paradise. So it felt. The boy's god Eros, tall and warm and sentient, colliding with death and distance, the feelings of desolation he then experienced, were more poignant than any effect of death and distance since.

There are places off there along that grey and barren coast which I could sketch for you inch by inch, setting forth the very mood of each scene, the seagulls screaming, the boy's tangled web of dreams. Had I chosen last night to tell you all this, it is possible I might have declared that it was there I had left my heart behind me. But tonight I have gone forth and fetched it home.

I have been thinking during the past few hours a great deal about my father and wishing, as I have so many times wished in the past, that he were still alive. There is so much I should like to ask him about — small matters, though, nothing to cause him alarm.

# I WAS ALWAYS FOUNDING RELIGIONS

WHEN I became twenty-six, John's age when he died, the thought assailed me that I should not live through the year. This notion appears quite ludicrous to me today. But I had been staggering forward under a crushing weight of hallucinations and distorted points of view, with confusion ruling my mind. I had not always been able to distinguish between truth and dread in various disguise. For a time I was on the verge of taking up with spiritualism, that flytrap of chicanery and stabilized hysteria, but I was successful in surviving that as well —yes, all I lacked was some abracadabra of intellectual sloth such as that! I believe that to a greater than average extent I had been lashed forward through all that was untenable. The pressure from Misery Harbour had been, for many reasons, too strong to permit me to adjust myself to delusion. You see, it was not a murder alone that lay behind me. That murder had been an ultimate result of my childhood, no more; had I possessed a different background that murder might never have happened. But I was aware of slightly more than I could then perceive through the medium of the hallucinations which thronged my mind.

I became more and more clearly aware that it was animal mind which was doing my thinking for me, and that religion, far from being the flower of human consciousness, is actually, on the

contrary, but an inhuman hang-over from that period of time when the pyramid was not yet a pyramid. Humanity has been by no means successful in blinding its own eyes to its growth and development and has therefore erected ultra-existence, a cosmos from the stuff of its own original sin. Out of this religions have evolved — in the front rank, Christianity and Mohammedanism.

# THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING FAIRYLAND

I REVISITED the scenes of my tragedy; I did so for a number of reasons and, in part at least, it was actually a pilgrimage of a sort, even though I did not, after all, venture as far as Misery Harbour. You see, since I had survived my perilous twenty-sixth year without dying, my desire had then become more intense. A further period of time elapsed, for I was by no means ripe for such a journey, and, of course, there are special difficulties attendant upon planning trips to other quarters of the globe. Nevertheless, one fine day I found myself in Montreal. I was without funds, but, even so, I somehow made my way west, working on farms and in the woods, stopping at a place or two with friends…

Later I returned to the region where the tragedy occurred. But the most important experience I had on my trip was, I suppose, my journey through the Strait of Belleisle. It surges through me like a wave of heat, the significance of that trip...

I imagined at that time that I had been avoiding that particular locality because I had not cared to encounter up this Walter Shece, but I later decided that I had set defense really because of a fear that something might come up in regard to Misery Harbour, for I might very easily, to be sure, have refrained from calling on Walter Shece. Nevertheless, I am of the opinion today that my first thought was actually correct. Or at least in part — in the main. Again I felt myself hemmed in by Eve and Ishbel on one side, John and Walter Shece on the other. But the murder, too, must have played some significant part… all in all, it was Fairyland through and through again, and although we are apprehensive on the subject of

childhood days, we have yet forgotten them so thoroughly that we believe them to have been happy. This process I had set in full motion again in the case of Newfoundland. I have two fairylands where I have believed that happiness lay. Such is true of neither of these places. And we draw back if suddenly we hear a call to return to Fairyland. Even the most consummate idiot feels a certain hesitation, when the matter is discussed, as to whether a man may hope to recapture his childhood. In spite of the fact that that period of life may have been happy beyond compare, one does not desire to live through it again, having had enough of that kind of happiness. It has always been better to be thirty years old than two or three.

There exist certain spiritual phenomena which can more accurately be described by means of a geometrical diagram than in words. If you will fix in your mind the geographical position of these two fairylands of mine and draw a straight line from each to a point in the sky midway between them, you will have an equilateral triangle, from the peak of which dangles a watch. It is an old-fashioned silver watch, and it is protected by a little case of transparent horn. The point where the watch s hanging is thus a place somewhere above the North Atlantic. Two fairylands bound together through the legs of a triangle and a watch.

All through the years I have nourished the thought that Ishbel became a mother. I could not bring myself to go to her and find that I had been mistaken. My son must replace the dead. I have sacrificed a son to the flames of Fairyland. The boy must be off there; perhaps he has his mother's black hair, the same black hair which lay bloody above the ears of another. Perhaps she has named him John. I have sacrificed my eldest son to the fire in Adamsen's barn, to Big John in heaven.

# A WATCH AND A BUTCHER'S SON

WE have been on the subject of watches before. You will recall that I referred in an earlier place to the murder of a girl whose body had

been discovered with a watch in the fatal wound. And you will recall the watches in the second-hand-dealer's shop. But the watch which figured in my first Fairyland belonged to the boy Anders Null. He was a butcher's son and a brutal terrorist. Once he prevailed upon me to join him in an exploit which involved something largely akin to rape, although the girls succeeded in making themselves agreeable before things had gone that far. Anders Null was not victim to the mental incapacity known as sympathy. With myself it has always been otherwise.

He was rich. He was already the owner of a silver watch the day he first entered school. All eyes aglitter, we would swarm about Anders to stare at that watch of his. He could tell time. With a supercilious air he would report to us the hour of the day. It was well for Anders that his was a robust physique. Had he been a delicate, slight lad, we should certainly have revenged ourselves upon him. However, he was anything but that. He was strong and brutal, a perfect terrorist himself. An appropriate son for a butcher.

As a matter of fact, a watch still reminds me of Anders Null and, with a watch in my hand, I am immediately flushed with the jealousy I once experienced in the past. A watch is something round and warm and alive. As a tiny boy I had nourished the dream of imprisoning this fellow nude in a little cage and of possessing his watch myself. Outside his cage I would stand with the watch in my hand. I should treat him to a spectacle of sacrilege by twisting the hands about and opening the case to examine the works. But at length I should perhaps almost forgive him and allow him to go for walks outside his cage with a ball and chain attached to his ankles. But clothes were out of the question for him ever again — that is, with the possible exception of heavy stockings and shoes when it was winter with snow on the ground, for it was hardly my intention that he should catch his death of cold.

# THE WATCH AND THE VIOLIN

MY father once made me a present of a cheap watch. I was fourteen at the time. It vanished shortly afterwards and I am unable to recall what ever became of it. I have never carried a watch since that day.

I have also possessed a violin. This I gave away to someone a year or two ago. I have witnesses to prove that I have played for dancing, though it took someone else to remind me fairly recently of this. I had quite forgotten that I could play the violin and, for that reason, I gave the instrument away. But it was odd, was it not, that I never once paused to wonder what under the sun, then, I was doing with a violin in my possession?

# THE DEAD MAN'S WATCH

IN the forest John Wakefield and I had the job of piling logs along a watercourse in such a fashion that they could be easily released into the water when the time for spring flotage came along. It was a grueling task, more than could be reasonably expected of two men. The timber was dragged down from the forest by team, the drivers hiring out under contract. It was like a bombardment of heavy logs and we had to toil like truck-horses to keep pace with their arrival. Once we halted to utter a protest, but, receiving only a threat of dismissal, we returned at once to our labours. Toward evening we would be more dead than alive as we pulled and hauled at the timber, and it is possible that our common drudgery was partly to blame for the hatred which gradually grew up between us. On John's side there existed at least some degree of doleful justice in the situation, for he was far stronger and nine years older than I. This is a significant fact to consider when the younger is hardly eighteen. The lad of eighteen may have plenty of muscular strength, but his physique still lacks in ruggedness; his flesh is still too flabby. There were only two of us on a job which required the strength of four men and, although I was working myself half to death, I really believe it was John who had to do the work of three.

He had a watch. I had none. Late in the afternoon when the slaves were yearning for nightfall, John would refuse to tell me the time. I do not expect you to comprehend the full significance of such a situation. Ask the man who works by the clock. Work and "work" are two different things: one is performed for pay and pay alone, the other for the love of the thing. Georg Brandes once looked with rage upon a group of craftsmen and immediately discharged a thunderbolt of denunciation in the newspaper concerning them. He

went so far as to declare that these fellows had only eight hours of labour to perform each day and were complaining that even this was too much, whereas it was his custom to put in sixteen hours of work in the course of every twenty-four. It did not occur to that irate old man that his sixteen working hours were actually sixteen hours of freedom and that the workman is really in a far worse position than he for the simple reason that the workman must first put in eight long hours of drudgery before he is free to take up the kind of work he enjoys and which he performs for the sake of the work itself —in his so called spare time. If the people in the free occupations are not the happiest people on earth they ought to be heartily ashamed of themselves and stop setting up a howl. They have their burdens, to be sure, but they, before all others, have their lives under their own stewardship. In them are united the advantages of culture and the freedom of savagery. But most often it is they who complain and grimace like baboons at their brothers in chains and it is they who are the patrons of morality. “You workers think too much of yourselves and all too little of the good of society! You ought to remember how blessed is work and how joyful the workman should be!”

But the joy of work is not to be found in the factory. There work is a curse and is a blessing only when compared with unemployment, which is a curse of an even worse order. The slave is held fast in a vice. His salvation is his ever-increasing apathy of mind. Many reach the point where they believe they are well off in the factory or with a cant-hook over their shoulders. But that is like-wise the point at which the Law of Jante may be said to have realized its purpose: all possibilities dead; the moralist has won his victory. To bring about precisely that condition of mind in the ranks of the slaves is the most important function of our authentic intellectual life.

John and I detested each other. During our last few weeks in the woods we were not even on speaking terms.

Just before I left I scored a minor triumph. John had insulted me that evening and had thrust a filthy finger into my food. I hit him a blow right there at the table where we were sitting, several plates crashing to the floor. A general commotion ensued, but the older

men took sides with me. The fight itself petered out. Immediately afterwards the foreman happened to be passing, and in the midst of a respectful silence I said: “Skipper, I want better pay!”

He turned sharply. “Yeah? You’ll be getting two dollars more after the first.”

It wasn’t enough of a raise.

I met the astounded man’s gaze without blinking. Everyone gasped and continued to breathe with difficulty. The foreman scanned the group and smiled: “Oh, you Jack!” he cried. “You ought to be satisfied with what you’re getting.”

“I’ll be leaving tomorrow, then!”

He continued chewing on his cud of tobacco for a few moments, smiling all the while: “Well, it’s six days’ notice here, Jack, my boy, so I guess you’d better think it over.”

“All right, you can keep a week’s pay, then, if you need my money. I’m leaving tomorrow.”

I left and he took six days’ pay. But that evening I had appeared a hero. I paid a price for this; John locked me out in the snow that night and both my feet became frozen.

For many weeks they continued to bother me when one is naked and it is twenty above zero, one no longer appears a hero.

I have often sounded people out as to the exact conditions under which they would hold a murder justifiable. I realize now that most frequently I have presented such questions to others at times when I myself was passing some crisis and again desired some insight into the condition which had made me into a murderer… that crisis which I have certainly well-nigh passed by now.

Not so many months ago out in Asker I called on my friend Brekke and asked: “Can one imagine that a person who murders another in the heat of passion and without hope of gain and who has not premeditated the murder — can one conceive of such a murderer plundering his victim — for example, by taking his watch? If it is in

a deserted place, and if there is no one else in the world who has any possible use for that watch? …"

Brekke pondered the question. "No," he said, "it is altogether too long a stretch from heat of passion and actual disaster down to the mere stealing of a piece of junk like a watch."

I was depressed to hear this. It was not the word "stealing" which had caused it. It was something which lay deeper than that, something which I cannot make clear to myself. Deeply discouraged, I roamed about the roads several hours, until at length I stopped in to see Leif Vikrestad. We had a pleasant chat together. I drew the conversation to the subject of murder and at length I asked him the question I had put to Brekke. Like Brekke, Vikrestad took my question with unexpected seriousness. He paced the floor a few times before replying: "No, you see — that rather presupposes an act in cold blood which does not quite fit into your condition. Psychology is by no means as schematic as one often may wish it were, and if now, as a matter of fact, the passion dies down — it may well happen that the watch would prove rather dangerous for the murderer. No, I'm sure he would leave the watch unmolested."

But I had taken the watch from John Wakefield's pocket, just before casting his body into the swamp, outside of Misery Harbour! ...

The watch is now lying on the bottom of the Atlantic, in the neighbourhood of Sable Island. I can still see the gentle ripples going out from the place where the watch had struck the water. I had stood with my hands out of sight over the rail of the ship and had simply let it fall. Closing my eyes, I see in fancy that watch of John Wakefield's sinking through layer after layer of water — sinking, sinking. And there had flashed through my mind at that time a quotation from the Book of Job, something quite idiotic in that connection; I fancied myself a clergyman at the moment of casting a bit of earth into a grave. To myself, as the watch was settling into the depths of the sea, I mumbled: "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" It was as though I had given John's watch back to him, and for a long time afterwards I felt that he and I were somehow reconciled.

# THE BUSINESS OF JUSTICE

A DEEP gulf separates the explained and the unexplained murder. The murderer who is caught in the toils of the law is in a dilemma in more than one sense. For he leaves to other minds the task of explaining his deed and, along with these other minds, is convinced that detection — the fact that his crime has come to light — Is synonymous with explanation. In this delusion he finds contentment and once again the human mind gayly skirts the truth. We have room in our minds for only a certain measure of guilty conscience. The man who has been apprehended lacks conscience with regard to the murder itself, for the reason that this has been thrust aside by a new sense of guilt based upon the fact that his felony is a matter of public knowledge. And once he has been sentenced to death, all sense of guilt must move out to make full room for terror. It is the business of justice to thwart all examination into the true problem of a particular murder.

# MAYBE YOU DON'T THINK—?

THERE was another occasion when I found myself in Leif Vikrestad's company. That was a good many years ago. There were several of us sitting about in a group and at length we fell to discussing a rather curious murder case which had just come up in Helsingfors. One thing led to another and with that we sought an explanation for the high percentage of murders in Finland. One of us suggested that it might have been the many wars, the political oppression, the frequent revolts, that had broken down the general respect for human life. Yes, Leif Vikrestad agreed that these might have had something to do with the situation but he suggested that this very national spirit of insecurity and unrest and the fact of numerous murders might be traced back to a common cause. He then began discussing Finnish psychology. I did not feel that his views were especially sound — strictly speaking, he was correct in his interpretation, but I could not agree that the qualities he attributed specifically to the Finns would necessarily lead to a high percentage of murders, for the very reason that one may find similar conditions elsewhere in the world, where murder is

anything but a major phenomenon. However, when it came to expressing my point of view, I was somewhat unfortunate in the form I chose and used the first person instead of a broader avenue of approach. Vikres tad's response closed my mouth for the remainder of the evening. "Yes, *you!*" he said. "I have known for some time that you ought to seek citizenship in Finland!"

His remark was so pointed that others noticed it. It is possible that no deeper meaning lay behind his words. However, you can well understand how they would strike me straight between the eyes.

# LEADERS

THERE are certain individuals who go about posing as supermen; they consider themselves entitled to a little of everything at others' expense. In particular, they express themselves with extraordinary nonchalance concerning life which is not their own to surrender. But there exists no Mussolini great enough to know in the least to what extent history may be altered by the killing of a single man and his inheritance, and to no Hitler will it ever be vouchsafed to know whom it would be better to have slain, the victim or the executioner. Power is an ugly thing and there is always an evil odor surrounding those possessed of madness for power. I realize that power will persist in the world, but that is no reason why we should not utterly despise it, and it is a beastly illusion to imagine that one must befoul himself in the exercise of it. Even where a veneer of culture obscures it, the man who is mad for power conceals a John Wakefield within his breast.

But it will always be necessary to keep the ghost invisible in new and better fashion, and by no one is this ever accomplished so well as by the analysts, the latter-day holy men. They call attention to themselves by proclaiming that the ghost was in them, but that they have succeeded in driving him out. To tell a portion of the truth about yourself is always effective strategy. So cunning has been their bluff that many honest souls have for a long time taken them at their word.

I myself have performed acceptably in the comedy of might. The

triangle is the time-honoured symbol of the struggle for power, in everyday life and in religion, which consists of the hallucinations of primitive man. My unquenchable desire for Eve was primarily a form of power-madness; it was my first consideration that she should belong to no one else but me. In a courtroom it would appear that Espen had killed John for Eve's sake. But the fact is I killed him for my own sake.

# THE VISION FROM MISERY HARBOUR

WHATEVER it was which lay behind my love for Eve, it continued to flame within me for many years. The glow dwindled in time, of course, but even after as many as ten years had elapsed, it might easily have been fanned to an active blaze. The memory of her remained vivid throughout the three blind years when the priestly aspirant was gradually forgetting the one who had taken her and whom he had murdered with his own hands. I have sat alone nights with a mad desire to scream her name. In brief, I loved her as excruciatingly as we love only those out of whom we have been cheated.

Who was she, what was she? That is impossible to say now; presumably a quite ordinary person, a half-mature strait-laced Jante soul, with a dimple which caused poor Espen to sway in his tracks. That face and that smile, which I now see before my eyes, obviously are indicative of absolutely nothing. They are but a romantic image of the woman I see, my vision of Eve from Misery Harbour.

But even though I know nothing about her today and am unable to say with full certainty just what she was even at that time, at least I know something of youth's ideal of femininity...

You saw the map which John had sketched. In addition to it I still have several trifles dating from that and from an earlier period. The year previous I had been in Stettin, and there in a shop window I caught sight of some post-cards on display along with an assortment of paper napkins and articles of that sort. One of the postcards, in

colour, was a bust portrait of a woman with a smile on her face and a rose pinned to her dress. For a long time I stood there gazing at it, but without courage to enter the shop. Instead I returned at length to the ship.

But the following day I returned and, with beating heart, strode into the shop. I did not venture to point out the postcard immediately. I first purchased a number of other trifles, for which I had no earthly use; afterwards I gave the shop-girl to understand that I desired something to write on. "*Brief schreiben!*" I said with an intensely innocent look on my face. She immediately brought me Paper and envelopes, and I was thoroughly disgusted with myself for having said letter when I meant card. "*Nein! 'Carte schreiben!*" I did not so much as turn my head in the direction of where the postcards lay; far should it be from me to have observed that such articles were carried in stock. She brought them forth and, with a gesture of indifference, I shoved the luscious portrait beside the other articles I had purchased. After leaving the shop I prided myself on the skill of my manoeuvre which had placed such a treasure in my possession. Immediately upon rounding the first corner I could not resist opening the package to gaze upon that lovely postcard. I do not exaggerate when I state that I even went so far as actually to kiss that penny portrait of a woman; I had heard that men did such things, but I found no pleasure in it and never repeated it.

I have kept the card to this day. The girl's figure is curved and buxom, her face evidencing excellent nourishment. She is smiling as sweetly and as vacantly as an angel on a holy picture. Her breasts bulge. Now that fashion decrees that women shall appear emaciated, it is true that the men run after the thin ones, but it has not been forgotten by one man that a woman's figure should be plump.

I carried the relic about with me long years and chance has willed it that I should possess it still. Chance? I do not know. It lay for a long time forgotten in a little flat box which I have dragged about with me through many an adversity and which also contained a silly letter once written to me by a girl.

After Misery Harbour the card became even more precious than before, for it was to me a portrait of Eve. In some way Eve must

have resembled the woman on the card, for the notion struck me the first moment my eyes fell upon her, though it may perhaps have been but youth, vacancy of expression, and smiling countenance that had appeared identical. I treated the matter somewhat romantically and imagined that it had been foreordained that I was some day to meet her. At that age, one is indiscreet enough to believe in personal attendance on the part of the spirits, and many have preserved that belief, it would seem, without loss to themselves.

The likeness was certainly imaginary, an attempt on my part to retain something of this woman who was never to be mine and whom I was never to see again. I retained the sorrowful effect and took youth's perverse joy in that. When, in secret, I have studied that fat girl from Stettin, I was convinced that my sorrow was well founded.

This entire atmosphere of lyricism I had draped about Eve has done me much harm and tended to cut me off from the society of women in general, as people noticed, for a number of years. It was probably all in the interest of soothing my sorrow, surely. I had suffered defeat and desired to suffer no more. Therefore Eve should be immortal. She should be my great, my pure, my only love. During my clerical period I got hold of a heavy psychological novel and became terrifically annoyed with the protagonist, who, in the course of fifteen or twenty years, fell in love not less than three times, to strains of vast nonsense from the author. Any intelligent person surely ought to have realized that the grand passion does not put in its appearance a second or a third time in life. To this effect I delivered myself most emphatically to imaginary persons.

I have met many women in my day, but I cannot say that I know very much about any of them. Of men I have been able to gain a fair impression in short order and, in a brief space of time, to understand them better than they cared to have me. But women could do about what they pleased without my ever learning anything vital about them. No knowledge obtruded itself. I went far to avoid women of intelligence. I openly hated them. Once and for all I had accepted for my type the woman from the postcard, the woman from Misery Harbour. I Would skip like a rabbit from each

and every woman who did not utter elegy; I would feel silly and embarrassed in the presence of such a woman, yet always would manage to lay the blame upon her: “Hm, she’s no real woman!” Men could be individuals, but women had to be expressions of a standard ideal, otherwise I would flee. There you have the unsound foundation for the masculinism: The woman’s place is in the home. She must not be sub-divided into separate individualities, lest man’s fear be fully aroused; she must be a composite delectation in his harem. The conception of the mother of God was born in a harem-conscious brain: She is the all-inclusive ideal, all women sprouting from a single pair of legs.

As for myself, I swung over to the opposition not so long ago — within the past three or four years. And the idea of the mother of God collapses definitively when one has broken with the holy triangle. I regard women today as individuals, just as I have always regarded men. And I am filled with venomous joy when I observe that the majority of women do not care for this in the least. As in the matter of style and dress which they slavishly follow, they strive tirelessly to realize the ideal of unsuccessful men concerning the one and only — commonplace woman, the holy mother of God! “We are the same, we are one; I am all the others combined in a single personality, I am the one you are seeking! Do you not see that I am exactly like all the others, that I am the one and only? Why do you not halt where you are and tell me that it is I who am beautiful?”

This much I deduced for other men: my image-building had been performed on volcanic ground, and in the fullness of time the volcano erupted. Well, I must have come through the eruption safe and sound, for here I am! I suppose it is our saddest mistake of all that we should hold certain things to be sacred. We hold to such a belief only because, being so thoroughly beset with anticipatory dread, we cling in all soberness to every last one of our countless fetishes, of which we possess more than the Bantu Negro. Fröken Nibe used to deplore the black and strayed sheep of Africa who pray to colored stones, though she herself believed that any boy who said “God damn” was certain to go to hell. With the passage of time, I have managed to liquidate a little of everything, and I cannot see it otherwise than that I have always become the richer

for it. The more waste one eliminates from one's system, the healthier one becomes.

That a man derives a certain amount of aesthetic pleasure from image-building I should hardly care to deny, but I believe that the idealization of woman is a mistake...

I look back upon my nights in Misery Harbour; it is with some effort today that I invoke my memory of them, visions which, up until a short time ago, would spring to mind with such eager vitality… Now I can no longer dream in that way and nothing more can happen which will cut so deep a trail. Then, too, it was only a boy who on certain nights went up into the mountains and gave wings to his vision of a girl. It was not spring, and no birds sang. It was gray and cold and the mountain stood naked in an alternate mantle of rain and snow. But the boy who was compelled to seek the mountainside because of his restless soul — he did not see that the night was gray; he saw only a budding earth and a sky awash with light. "Never shall you have her, John, never, never, never."

# "THIS MUCH IS COMMON SENSE," THE OLD WOMAN SAID

BUT it is the law and the prophets that a great John Wakefield shall come and take the one we love and look down upon us with mocking eyes from his height when we bewail our loss. And the years will pass and roles will be exchanged and we ourselves will take over the role of Big John. This does not seem to us nearly so bad, though possibly it yields a less abundant joy. For even if we do at length find ourselves in the adults'shoes, it is only repetition after all, always repetition. There is nothing new in the world after we have passed seventeen. Then it may be that certain of us would prefer to be the fleeing John who feels the steel in his neck. What were his thoughts at *that* moment?

But it also sometimes happens that a man has gained such speed

that he actually passes himself and abandons the role of Big John Wakefield, in relation both to his own children and to other men. It is rather seldom that anyone should so far cleanse his own life and such cases are not likely to be mentioned in a normal conversational tone. Such a man is sure to hear something concerning his conduct and character. His less successful worshippers will go over and sniff the corners of the house where he has stood and relieve nature on the spot. He stands alone in a way they do not like; perhaps he goes around thinking he is something? And daily he runs afoul of the triangle's secret caption: *This woman is mine, and therefore thou shalt lust after her*.

Women have known this from the dawn of time and have set up the triangle whenever the man grows too cold for them. But the usual one-and-only type is too stupid to understand when the man has outgrown John Wakefield and no longer has any use for a competitor.

# THOU SHALT NOT KNOW MORE THAN THE REST

I AM a Sunday child and was born with a caul [7] over my face. The first detail I was able to reckon out for myself one time, and when I told this to Mother, she told me about the caul, though she regretted it immediately and later, when I asked her if it were true, she refused to answer me. That is how she was: things like that ought not to be in the world, children ought to be born on a week-day, and the matter of the caul left her mind in a panic. There was to be no mention whatever made of it.

I am no longer superstitious with regard to the days of the week, but I am amazed that Moses had already forbidden it. It would seem to me that such is really quite innocent sport. However, the thing is subject to degeneration and I know a certain person for whom almost every undertaking is taboo on Mondays.

And the caul — that is a matter as difficult of determination as is the matter of Gustav Vasa and his lackeys. In the first place, Mother

may have been mistaken, for she had given birth to a large number of children. In the second place, the facts are the same whether she remembers correctly or not. I shall not protest if one of the others claims the caul for himself.

But there was formerly a time when such things were matters of deep significance. And there was a time when I could not endure that others should have intangible possessions and that others could not endure that I had them.

This gave rise to countless collisions during childhood. Once, during the spring, there came a mighty blizzard. I must have been very young, for that was all of thirty or more years ago. All night it had snowed so hard that in the morning, by climbing the snowdrifts, we could reach the roof of Adamsen's barn. I borrowed a pair of high boots belonging to one of my older brothers and I, too, went floundering off. Later, when I took the boots off in the kitchen, there was a trace of snow left on the toes. Noticing this, someone remarked to me that snow causes boots to rot.

Perhaps the speaker had said more, but I remember only this one remark of his. In mortal dread, I knelt down before the boots and scrutinized them. I did not dare remove the snow. I only stared at them and regarded the whole situation in the light of dire calamity.

This incident of the boots I never discussed. But long afterwards, upon referring one time to the blizzard, I was told that such a snowstorm as that had never occurred during my lifetime. The statement was sharp and decisive, passing at once from the speaker's mind, so there was need for me to fancy I was something. But then something occurred to someone else in the room and he said: "Oh! That's just like you! That's simply boasting on your part, for that blizzard came on the very day you were born!"

Naturally, this seemed to everyone a gorgeous joke, and this time it was someone else who recalled that it had been he, not I, who had floundered up to the roof of Adamsen's barn. As a matter of fact, my mother had given birth to a child that day: my baby brother. It was odd, in this connection, that no one was ever allowed to relate anything or to give the slightest indication that he might possibly know or remember something. Nothing could bring about a clash as

effectively as this. Each one of us demanded to be the sole possessor of the entire mythology.

I know of no one who ever cared in the least to listen to me from the time I lost Rose in Fairyland up until the time I met John Wakefield. The friendships lying in that interim were, for the most part, one-sided exchanges: the one might be permitted to say something, but not without a struggle to keep the other party from talking also, and neither ever listened to what the other was saying. It is probably true that one has no right to be heard until he has first developed the ability to listen, but then perhaps he has less use for being heard.

John Wakefield was willing to listen to me for a time, but then he was willing no longer, and so I killed him. Perhaps that, too, is the story, as simply told as a little fairy-tale.

[7] Noun: 1.the amniotic membrane enclosing a fetus. 2. historical: a woman's close-fitting indoor headdress or hairnet.

# I CRIED OUT TO MOTHER AND FATHER

MY recollection of the high boots and the blizzard is closely associated with another experience which came a short time later, the following summer, I am sure. In a clearing in the woods a pair of horses were grazing. It was Sunday and I was wearing a nice new blouse. Some big boys began frightening the horses by throwing stones at them. I took to my heels, but was unable to run very fast. Hearing the thunder of hoofs as the horses came after me in hot pursuit, I cried out in terror. Then, as I continued to scream, the horses began yelling at me in human speech — angry threats they roared at rue, and their voices were coarse and rough. At that I went mad with fear. With my little legs working at top speed, I cried out to Mother and Father, my fear as intense as though the entire world had been on fire, when I realized that I should be unable to escape those wild horses possessed of human voices. At length one of them caught me from behind and trampled me

underfoot. I rolled about beneath it, and suddenly it was no longer a horse but an enormous man with a rope in his hand. He assailed me with a rain of blows, meanwhile roaring about those damnable young hellions who had stoned his horses.

Then he left me and ran on. I lay still, staring up into the trees. The pains I suffered were incredible, but I somehow managed to scramble to my feet and made off, strengthened only by my dread of the man and my fear that he might possibly return. One of my arms hung limp and I was powerless to lift it for many days afterwards; that night there also appeared on my chest a number of great soft swellings, although the rope had by no means struck me there.

I was fortunate in being able to keep the whole affair to myself, for it was impossible to know what the grown-ups would say, and it was, of course, conceivable that they would decide I needed a thrashing simply because I had been thrashed. Mother had already scolded me because that lovely new blouse of mine had become so terribly soiled.

This incident is related to that of the snowstorm through the fact that I had been wearing high boots at the time and therefore had been unable to run. You see, in our family the older children were always outgrowing their footgear and passing it down to the younger. The man with the rope — he is the blizzard.

# THE HORSE

THE HORSE is the most curious creature in the world. It is a great strong wildness lacking arms. Looking upon the horse when I was very young, I was moved to pity for such a huge block of flesh propped up on four posts, in such a way that it could do no more than move itself about. I was most bitterly anxious that the horse should have arms sprouting from its shoulders, and to this day I am still sensitive of this lack. Such a little shaver to have caught the idea of the centaur!

Soon, too, the horse became for me a menacing symbol for the male

sex, for I had witnessed an act of equine copulation in Adamsen's barn, an impression of violence and passion never to be forgotten. Later, when I was probably twelve or thirteen, I saw a picture of a centaur racing off with a woman he had captured. Hysterically she lay struggling in the arms of that twin being and I was filled with a tumult of emotion as I continued to gaze. Yes, so! Just so was the way to treat her!

Brilliant minds have long puzzled over the origin of the conception of the centaur and it is commonly supposed that it may be traced back to a primitive impression of horse and rider. This sounds reasonable enough, but I really believe that such an impression served merely to set loose something which lay even deeper.

In the sodden brain of Eivind Harre there also arose the feeling that the horse lacks arms. The last time Eivind and I were together, he was afraid to sleep in the dark, lest his room be suddenly thronged with horses, screaming because use someone had cut off their arms, blood gushing from their severed and helplessly gesturing stumps.

Eivind loved horses and he was a splendid rider; his love of horses lured him into the army, and before he was discharged, he achieved the rank of lieutenant of cavalry. Often horses which had been cut in two would appear to him, or horses with horrible gashes in their bodies. Eivind was wretchedly affected by such scenes and he would beg to sleep in the same room with me, where he could rest undisturbed. He confided to me that visions of this order might continue to afflict him for more than a week after he had been on a spree and that he therefore fairly shuddered at the thought of getting drunk, though he would nevertheless be compelled to take to the bottle when the delirium had passed, and often before, in order to rid himself of it.

But the horse did not represent to me what it did to Eivind. He saw it as mutilation and suffering. I regarded it as strength and conquest. He was the horse himself. I was not.

Once, many years ago, I had a dream about a horse. Very often, indeed, I dream of horses, but this particular dream belongs far back on the other side of Fairyland, for it came to me so early in life that I lacked the ability to tell it to anyone. Together with a group

of boys I was standing in the middle of the road and there, approaching us, was an awesome horse. It had a tremendous head and long, sharp teeth which hung down like a beard. All the other boys managed to slip away from it, but me it forced into a corner between the houses, where it addressed me. “I will not eat you,” it said, “if you will always see that you are in bed by six o’clock. In the morning you must not get up before ten o’clock.”

It was a doleful dream and I was fearfully distressed by the orders the horse had given me. For a long time afterwards I suffered from a guilty conscience whenever I would ask Mother the time. That dream must date back all of thirty years. Not so long ago I succeeded in identifying the horse. It was my father.

With only a few of my fantasies concerned with horses has a sense of genuine terror been associated. From what I have already told you, it is possible that you have gained the opposite impression; however, I have told you all too little concerning the world wherein the horse lived. It was something grand and radiant, it was an ideal or it was the thundering music of horns. It might also become music of a different order, the music one dreams of when one is sitting alone and unhappy, a music which may never be composed. Then it may be that horses leap forth from a forest of color, wild hot colors like those of a world on fire. And the horses are somewhat stylized, almost as on Assyrian reliefs, but they are none the less wild and powerful. They storm forward in snorting ranks by hundreds, rank after rank, with fiery eyes and flashing manes. The horse represents everything which is wild and conscienceless, it is catastrophe and challenge to catastrophe, it is the flaming wish-dream in the language of pictures, it is money, power, joy. And there lowers an ominous sky of thunder-clouds over it — it is the sky above Adamsen’s stallion, him whose leg was smitten off by lightning; but it is also the child’s wish of rebellion, the child who would sit supreme in a sky of thunder and launch the lightning at all who are big and strong.

I once saw a whole team of horses drown in Hamburg Harbour. There were twelve or fourteen horses hitched together in a long team and it was impossible to cut them loose from each other in order to permit them to swim and all at length were drowned.

Something had thrown them into a panic; one was forced over the edge of the quay and, in falling, dragged all the others after him. It was there that I heard how a horse may scream. They cried like little children, but with appallingly piercing voices. Many days afterwards I still felt the urge to pray God to free my ears from the echo of that sound. Later, on another occasion, I was to experience something similar. But that time it was my own fault…

# THE CLEANSING BATH OF STEEL

THERE was a bullfight in Cartagena. I have no use for bullfights. They are nothing short of bloody debauchery. Nevertheless, it was high time I had seen one. Those simpletons in scarlet costume! They ran the gamut of silly hocus-pocus, let the bulls mangle a number of horses, and afterwards slaughtered the bulls. Two had at length been slain and the third was entering the ring. Nor had those martyred horses uttered a single sound; silently they had allowed themselves to be thrown to the sawdust, where they had slowly bled to death. Normally, horses are silent when wounded; they may, of course, neigh with fear, but seldom do they actually scream.

The third bull was black with patches of white. After he had been played with for a time, he gored a poor old skinny nag, the rider brilliantly leaping from his back in the very nick of time. The horse lay rolling around on the ground while the bull bounded off a short distance in hot pursuit of the man. After the horse had risen to his haunches and was sitting there like a dog, the bull returned to assail him from behind in such a way that those powerful tossing horns of his thrust their way along the horse's sides, laying open flesh and grating against bones with the sound of a knife cutting through dry cork... Then it was that the horse emitted a scream, a long and agonized scream. And the bull continued to gore him and his horns were now red with blood. The horse struck out weakly with its forelegs, but uttered no further sound. A profligate sigh arose from the assembled multitude.

I suppose that such a spectacle might be said, after all, to have

served a good purpose, could it be shown that the people in such a locality find in it an outlet for their perversities and that they will thereby remain under control until the next time horses and cattle are thus sacrificed to the public weal. I doubt, however, that the perversities of human nature may be disposed of by merely putting them to sleep.

In the matter of normal sex life I believe the situation to be much the same — it gives rise to a taste for more —but, at all events, man and woman find themselves in the same hangman's cart. We ought to leave the animals to themselves in theirs.

# IN TERROR OF THE STUPID

THE BULL! It, too, occupies a place in a dim world of symbolism, and quite probably came by it also on Adamsen's farm. But the bull never found its way to a very prominent position in my life, as it never advanced beyond the point of being a symbol for my Uncle Frederik — you know, the man who sold his daughters to Olavsen.

Uncle Frederik had a fence in front of his house; it was a decidedly rickety affair and he would always keep his eye peeled for anyone who might venture to touch it. Once some other little boys and myself happened to be standing by the fence when Uncle Frederik appeared. We were off like a shot. But one of Latterfrosken's brothers, believing human nature to be possessed of reason and intelligence, remained standing where he was. Uncle had a spade in his hand and with this he bashed the boy, who fell to the ground with blood streaming from his nose. Learning from this a little something on the subject of justice, the lad picked himself up and fled.

Per, the boy's father, went to my father and complained, for he was afraid to approach Uncle Frederik directly. Father laughed at Per and said that the boy ought to have run away, for he must certainly have been old enough by this time to have known what would happen to him were he to stay where he was. Father was no man to hold it against a boy for taking refuge in flight, and we admired him for that. School-teachers and similar persons of refinement held

to the opinion that a boy should remain rooted to the spot, say yes, sir, and allow a spade to come crashing down on his skull. It was more fun by far to skip clear of danger and turn back to whistle through one's fingers! And Father said to Per: "Frederik is a bull, but that boy of yours showed himself to be even stupider than he, for he waited to tell the bull he hadn't done anything."

There was a supine and primitive form of evil in Uncle Frederik and he loved telling about his pitifully insignificant exploits, always some inane act of violence he had found opportunity to perpetrate against some innocent soul. He never managed to loose his spite upon us, for we never gave him a chance. We early learned to fear him. I was always amazed to hear anyone speak of visiting his uncle or aunt and I would readily let slip a bit of a lie on such occasions by indicating that it was our habit to do the same. Between Father and Uncle Frederik there existed an ancient enmity dating back to their youth, when Father had taken the oath to abstain from drink. Uncle Frederik had never forgiven him for that. In my relationships to Uncle Frederik and to other of our neighbours I was aware of no difference at all, save that I feared him one degree more than any of the others.

My dread of the bull has never diminished. It is as active today as it ever was. Fundamentally, its causes may fall under the head of what people term "natural": The bull is admittedly a dangerous beast and in an open field one has little chance to escape its fury. But I dread the bull as I would the Devil himself, and this applies to no other creature. Once I stood face to face with an enormous lynx; we had probably both been walking along in a semi-daze, when suddenly we spied each other and halted no more than a couple of yards apart. The creature immediately squatted with a hiss and made ready to spring at me. Normally, a lynx will flee, but this one perhaps had cubs near at hand. The situation lasted possibly a minute, during which, with the utmost deliberation, I raised my ax to a striking-position and waited for the cat to leap. My chance was slim; as you know, one can have no end of trouble with an ordinary house-cat when it becomes wild, whereas the lynx is a regular little tiger. Then — suddenly, like a flash, it was gone.

I had not been afraid, but had, in fairly cold blood, deliberated on

the possible results of the encounter. Dread is a curious thing. In the woods one might dance rings around a bull. Not so a lynx. Had it been a bull there in front of me, there exists no form of stupidity I should have failed to commit. But while standing there face to face with a lynx, I even had time and poise enough to consider the master Iversen's remarks to the effect that the lynx does not inhabit Newfoundland. I later came across similar statements in several text-books; that was when I still believed that what is printed in books is always correct, and these statements vastly annoyed me. I have since learned to take things like that more calmly. Today they would leave both lynx and me equally unperturbed.

There in the forest we used to chase after hares and catch them in our hands; you see, when the little hare turns white before snowfall, it is difficult for it to hide itself from view. It does not employ flight as a protective 'ensure; its instinct is to play hide-and-seek and to bob up in the same place more than once. It is a poor runner and is a naïve little soul. It was grand sport, the only fun we had, and the forest would ring with shouts of pleasure when the hunt was on and twenty husky men would come tearing down a hillside on the heels of a rabbit.

But let the zoologist remain dead; I no longer desire to go further astray in the animal kingdom…

# THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

THE HORSE I did not fear; it filled me with pious admiration. Moreover, you see, I recognized the horse in a different embodiment: the Flying Dutchman.

It was the legend of the Dutchman that once led my thoughts in retrospect to childhood's first impression of horses, for I realized that the emotions experienced by sailors at the thought of the Flying Dutchman were identical with those I myself had experienced as a very small child at the sight of the stallions on Adamsen's farm.

It is a common assumption that the Flying Dutchman is feared. This

is not so at all. He is admired to the point of ecstasy. He is the man of catastrophe idealized, the mighty insurgent. Granted, he must suffer defeat when he chooses to defy even God Himself, but he's a sly one! In the very blaze of the thunderbolt from on high he is seen sailing away, laughing derisively at God…

How many have been conscious of a perpetual desire to round some cape? Cape Horn, the Cape of Good Hope… And is it not a curious and limitless irony that he may never have permission to do so? Yes, why Was not Adam granted permission to have an apple to eat? The Lord must have had His reasons. Thou shalt not touch the apple! Thou shalt not round the sacred angle of the holy triangle! Never through all eternity mayest thou have permission to round Cape Horn! Thou shalt not lust after thy father's women or covet thy father's power.

Now, the fact is, the Bible is a product of the Orient. Had it been written somewhere along the coast of north-west Europe, Fröken Nibe would have devoted herself to deprecation of the scandalous Dutchman who endowed us with original sin because, in defiance of his father's will, he insisted upon sailing round Stadt. However, though we prefer the Dutchman and his rebellious spirit, we have instead the story of poor Eve and the apple. And this merely represents the difference between south and north...

The wild mood of catastrophe surrounding the Dutch-man — I found it in Adamsen's barn, that great burning joy! First came the horse; sitting upon it, I rode into Adamsen's barn. Later, in the outside world, I encountered the horse again: the raging individual who demanded to round Cape Horn.

# THE KLABAUTERMANN

BUT there is another character found at sea, he who is luckless and shipless: the black Klabautermann. And him, too, I recognized in my own life; he had been the terror within the barn. The doomed one, without a horse and without a ship, and the stormy heathen who possesses both ship and good fortune and who desires to round Cape Horn... combined, they are Adamsen's barn. I can lay claim to

a tiny degree of scholarly distinction in connection with the Klabautermann. Once I had pondered rather deeply as to who he had been originally. Not because of any vast amount of interest involved in the matter, for it is by no means the dogmas and ikons of religion that are significant, but rather the emotion inspired by a god. In any event, I worked away at the problem and got hold of an old naïve picture of the Klabautermann; he appeared as a diminutive figure leaning against a mast. On his head he was wearing a red woolen cap. His beard was long and in his hand he was holding a hammer. What was the significance of the latter?

My next source was a German horse-trader who had been to sea in his day. We sat drinking together at a table in Malmö, and at length he began relating a gruesome tale about the Klabautermann, who had taken up his residence in the mainmast of a barque from Königsberg. Each night he would appear from the mast and crush the head of a man with that hammer of his.

“Hammer?” I asked. “Does he have a hammer?”

“Yes, *der Klabautermann*,” the horse-trader explained. “That is Low German and means the hammer man. *Klabautern* means to hammer.”

I ransacked my brain to recall what had become of the hammer god, Thor. He and other figures of abject deviltry had been driven into the sea by the priests of the Christian faith…

The Klabautermann is the fallen Thor. And the priests were favoured by fortune; they had driven him to sea as a demon, and a demon he became. But all this is, strictly speaking, of no consequence; we should probably have come upon this character even without Thor. Take only the case of Draugen, who resembles him no little and whose craft is but half a boat.

Before Christianity invaded the north, the people did not pray to their gods; instead they formed alliances with them. Man was one party to a contract. This attitude continued for a long time in a perverted form, though clearly enough as pacts with the Devil. *Faust* is a heathenish drama. But it came about that the gods would not always enter into agreements. This gave rise to two main types, the

man who was lucky and the man who was not. Both were all right in their way, but tradition viewed the former as wearing a mantle of glory, the latter as cloaked with pathos, and recognized but these two types.

We have them to this day as the Flying Dutchman and the Klabautermann. The sailor has remained loyal to them.

But they are preserved not only in the formal tradition. They lay beneath everything Fröken Nibe ever taught us. They awaken in new shapes in every single child-soul. Later they become a part of us, and it is impossible to separate them from our lives, no matter how hard we may try. We have our wish-dreams of seeing them each in his individual kingdom as God and as Satan, but our desire shall never be crowned with success. Adamsen's barn is one and indivisible and Janus is the master of it. He never knows in advance through which mouth he will choose to speak.

Heaven and hell do not grow together in our hearts with our approval. That these may be kept distinct is the Utopian demand we strive to achieve...

But also strive to defeat. For in ourselves we are determined to be one.

I admired John Wakefield. He was all that I had struggled to become, and had almost abandoned all hope of ever becoming. He was the mighty one, the man of good fortune. I admired him with the fiery passion of the youth of seventeen. He was the one I should have been. A modest ideal on my part, it may be said, of course. But so it was. Re was the one I wished to be and in my dreams we had been, on more than one occasion, the same man, and together we would scorn a puny Espen Arnakke. He was the god with whom I had wanted to form an alliance, but the god refused to enter into a pact with me.

Simultaneously, he was the man of good fortune and I was the one who had no luck whatever. That is how it appeared to me... But perhaps our positions were re-versed in his mind? In the beginning he envied me...

When calamity at length broke in upon us, it was the Dutchman's encounter with the Klabautermann. It was the lightning which had blazed to earth from a thunder-cloud and smitten off the leg of Adamsen's stallion. It was quite simply an encounter between two men, such as we all really desire deep within us. I will have all women and murder all men. We are head-hunters, all.

# THE ESSENCE OF GOSSIP

GOSSIP is a measure of self-defense. The more an individual tattles on others, the more he believes he himself has something to conceal. Gossip about others is an endless screw. I have resorted to telling tales on myself, since self-concealment entails too great a waste of time. Gossip is truthful — about the one who spreads it.

In talebearing we venture to look at others. Gossip can be a good beginning only to the degree that we have the courage to see through it. Darwin arrived on the scene and tattled on all of us, spread gossip about our common childhood, our common origin. His act was fraught with peril, but he managed to carry it off. At length Freud ventured upon the individual; he put his finger on the same lineations in you and in me which Darwin had dared only to regard as impersonal traits carried along through hundreds of millions of years. Freud has builded upon Darwinism, possibly without realizing it, and has offered a final proof of its contentions. Thus has evolution quietly outdistanced its opponents, squatting in their blind alleys where, to the delight of living flesh, they thumb their noses at bones and remains unearthed in Java or Turkestan.

One is almost led to a belief in some form of Providence which produced these very bones for the mere purpose of leading the keepers of the dark into a blind alley. There they may sit and have a high old time feeding living flesh with Javanese bones. The spirit slipped silently past the man with the Javanese bone and the explanation in the tipping of a table. Silently it slipped past, its cap pulled over its eyes, unnoticed.

Aside from the difference that I slew a fellow-man before completing my development and have been thus led to recall my

period of growth, there is nothing at all unusual in my story. You and every other person who have followed my words must surely realize that, bit by bit, it is the childhood of every living person I have been laying bare. The difference between others and myself is only that I have had occasion to recall facts in sequence, and within a year or two at most my report, in a direct sense as well, will seem utterly commonplace. He who is the least bit observant must be aware that the individual is in the act of cleaning up after himself, or at least of opening doors once believed to be taboo.

# THE FIRST KLABAUTERMANN

I SHALL now tell you the reason why I Was so deeply stirred by that widely travelled horse-trader in Malmö when he informed me that *Klabautermann means Hamremann* or Hammer Man.

I shall tell you that, as the Hammer Man, I suddenly identified him in relation to my own life. It was a fortuitous similarity of name that brought this about. The Klabautermann has been many individuals; once he was myself, and once, for a long time, he was identical with my brother Petrus. But within the bounds of Fairyland he was the wealthy farmer Jens Nordhammer. Or perhaps it would be better to say that, later on in my life, Nordhammer took on the identity of the Klabautermann, the man with the hammer.

Jens Nordhammer had died the year before I was born, but he still lived as a vivid memory during my early childhood, for people had had good cause to remember him. Possibly it would have been better had I told you less about Adamsen and more about old Nordhammer. But it is easier to believe in a living man than in a dead one. It was indeed Nordhammer who reigned supreme in Adamsen's barn.

There are few facts I can relate concerning the man himself; the emotions he awakens are everything. In many respects he had resembled Adamsen, save that he had wielded greater power. His activities had been many and he had but partially devoted himself to the practice of law, which was his official calling. Father often said that from Nordhammer had emanated much harm and no

good. He was the kind to refuse the poor man's single lamb before it is fat and shaggy. Always he would have the law on his side, and never did it occur to him that it was wrong to avail himself of it. Nordhammer was thin and wizened, in soul as well as in body, and he would assume a tyrannical appearance only when it served his purpose to do so. He was less humane than Adamsen. He was taciturn and had never been known to utter a superfluous remark. No profitless word existed in Jens Nordhammer's vocabulary, for his entire knowledge was limited to profits and interest.

My parents had had nothing to do with Jens Nordhammer; they had known him only by sight and reputation. But he had otherwise occupied a decidedly prominent position in the consciousness of humble people.

I have told you before that Mother did not fancy anything out of the ordinary, and that she lived her entire life in mortal fear of it. Nevertheless, she never succeeded in holding her tongue on the subject of the amazing experience she once had with the dead Nordhammer.

I am unable to state exactly how old I was when the incident occurred, though I am positive it was prior to my second birthday. Mother was always inclined to vacillate in her statements covering that point, on occasion asserting that I was a year and a half old at the time, on another that I was hardly a full year old. At all events, it was after I had learned to walk, a function I could perform when I was nine months old.

One night Mother was lying in bed unable to fall asleep. She suffered considerably from insomnia. After a time, sensing that she was lying on her hair, she sat up in bed to arrange it more comfortably. On the table by her bed a little oil lamp was burning, and I lay asleep in my crib, so placed that Mother could reach out and touch me with her hand. This was to the right of her own bed; to the left stood Father's bed and beyond that a door.

As Mother was sitting there with one of her braids in her hand, she noticed that the door-handle was mysteriously being pressed downward. She was too petrified to call out to Father, but continued to stare at the door, which was slowly opening. It was the

dead Jens Nordhammer who entered the room. With an ominous and withered smile on his lips, he remained standing for a moment inside the door and gazed at her; he was clad in the same coarse gray homespun which people had always seen him wear in life. His eyes assumed a far-away as though he were searching for something, and a moment later he took a couple of strides and stood in the middle of the room. As his eyes fell upon the crib in which I lay, Mother suddenly realized that it was I he had come for. She turned hastily to protect me, but immediately observed that another was already standing over my crib. This apparition Mother was never able to describe very clearly, but it had eyes, or something intended for eyes. Once Mother essayed a more exact description and told us that it might well have been a skeleton swathed in a garment of many folds. Nordhammer cried out in anger that he was to have me since he had arrived there first, but the other only gave him a dark smile and bent low over my crib. Then Mother emitted a piercing scream and flung herself upon me. Father was awakened and hurriedly leaped out of bed. He listened to Mother's story, but had himself seen nothing at all.

According to Mother's account, she could hardly have been asleep, though there exists, of course, more than one form of slumber. Later on, in my presence, Father unquestionably committed a blunder; he advanced the opinion that Death and the evil genius of the world had come to grips for the possession of my soul. Which gained the victory? The fact is, I remained alive! You are not to think less of my father on this account. All too little ever happened in his world to vary his existence and it probably seemed pleasant at times to imagine that influential other-worldly powers took a personal interest in us. However, it is hard to see how such a conception ever did me any good; it formed in my mind a complex which for a long time I sought to make the core of my cosmos.

Nor does the story end with what happened that night. Father was to be given more than enough grounds to support his supposition: The following morning, not four hours after Death and Nordhammer had stood in my room, I was lying unconscious in my crib, and I suffered, in the course of the day, several severe convulsions. It was brain fever.

For ten days I lay with ice-packs on my head, and on one occasion, after Mother had abandoned all hope for me and, on her knees by my crib, was calling upon God, the doctor who arrived to see me raised her to her feet and said that here was a matter best left entirely in God's hands to arrange. "It will be worse for the boy if he manages to pull through," he told her.

Yes, by Jove, and here I sit — I did pull through! My eyes have been poor ever since and often it would seem as though I were viewing the world through a thin layer of horn. My left eye was forced clean out of its socket when my fever was at its height. Death had almost gained the day, but Nordhammer had stepped in and beaten him off.

The day before I fell ill, Mother had apparently felt somehow uneasy about me. Something had seemed wrong with me, perhaps. She had been dimly aware of my illness before it had objectively manifested itself, and as the night wore on, her thoughts more and more had centred themselves on me. In this receptive condition she had had a vision. Moreover, she was subject to hallucinations and brief spells of amnesia.

# THE BLOODY STAR OF FORTUNE

IN Hans Christian Andersen's A Story about a Mother, you will likewise find Death as the representative, if not exactly of good, at least of the presumably best. Otherwise, most frequently absolute good is pitted against absolute evil.

It was hardly the best thing in the world to allow a child to grow up in the belief that he had been snatched from the jaws of death, only to become the pawn of the evil forces of the universe. But so it was with me. It was my firm conviction that I should not be allowed to die until I had committed some downright vicious deed. This often filled me with the courage of desperation. I believed in the bloody star of fortune: I cannot die until I have complied with the will of Jens Nordhammer! The sin against the Holy Ghost! That I should

commit! But, you see, the sin against the Holy Ghost — that is no more than a sense of insecurity accompanied by fullblown terror, for sin against the Holy Ghost can be almost anything. Every priest and minister feels called upon to utter remarks on the subject, with the excellent result that we all have equally good reason to believe that we all have actually committed it, the priests included. Nothing in all of Christianity tends so strongly in the direction of infamy in the eyes of the Law of Jante as does this renowned sin against the Holy Ghost. But I have long since given up all hope of ever being able to identify it.

Instead I hit upon another sin for myself. Of the Ten Commandments, there exists in all only one which is still walled in behind full battlements of terror, and that is the Fifth. The remaining nine fade into the background which is the Law of Jante.

The human being is involved in everything and experiences everything. I belonged to the dead Jens Nordhammer precisely as Faust belonged to Mephistopheles. Nordhammer would protect me and assure me of a safe journey through the world until I had slain a human being. Afterwards I should certainly be permitted to go on living a good while on my own account and at my own risk, as a reward for having allowed him to accomplish his will through me.

# THE DOCTOR'S VERDICT

SOME years ago Petrus called on me while Gjatrid was out and I was caring for the children. I no longer recall the object of his visit, for naturally he would not have come except on some specific errand. After we had finished our conversation, he remained seated awhile longer to watch me as I attended to the children, which consisted in bathing them and putting them to bed. Suddenly he said: "It seems to me that you're a lot easier to get along with now than you used to be when you were a youngster."

Although I was, of course, a grown man, judging from my several children, I was rather moved by such appreciation from my "big brother," even though it was conditional. There was something I simply had to remember. Always it had been my desire for these

elder brothers of mine to tell me something about that period of time which lay behind my conscious recollection, and now I said, cautiously: “Well well! What, then, was wrong with me when I was a youngster?”

Petrus went on to tell me — not much, of course, but at least something, and there was a friendly light in his eyes. “It seems you had brain fever, and afterwards you couldn’t walk. We were on the point of believing that you would be an epileptic for the rest of your life. All of a sudden you would make an awful face and fall down on the floor. The whole family were on pins and needles because of you. As for Mother, it was always Espen here and Espen there... But it seems you’re a lot easier to get along with now... ”

Then I recalled the story Father used to tell: The doctor never really believed what was told him, but then one day he happened to be present and saw an attack for himself… I had fallen and was lying in a rigid and contorted position on the floor. He picked me up and examined me. Father said that I looked like a little nestling which lay dead on the ground in the rain. The doctor massaged my limbs and I quickly revived. In a few moments I was playing about on the floor as though nothing whatever had happened. The doctor picked up his hat and looked at me for a time. The verdict he delivered was hardly profound; instead he exclaimed ingenuously: “Well, I’ll be damned!” And with that he left.

My attacks ceased when I was about three years old.

# AN ADMISSION

Now you must see something which resembles an old hotel bill. On the back some few lines have been written. Once you declared that I ought not to drink. Perhaps you are right in that and, moreover, I no longer drink to the same extent I once did. The drinker celebrates a mystery. This you need not expect good prohibitionists to understand; the drinker, either. Modern psychologists analyze people on the basis of their dreams. It would be simpler to proceed from the patient’s attitude toward the bottle. This offers a broader avenue of approach.

As to my own habits of imbibing, six months or even a year may elapse between bouts. But I must end up by going on a tear, after which I seldom touch a drop until my next spree. As a matter of fact, one would be obliged to record me as belonging to the most temperate element of society. It has never occurred to me to go to any great lengths in order to procure liquor.

But for many years intoxication has provided me with release which I was unable to find in sobriety. My inebriation progresses at a terrific rate, a series of violent changes being noticeable; my powers of memory and association are increased to a vast degree when I am drunk. The better part of what I have told you has been dredged from the depths and elevated to consciousness under the influence of alcohol. Psychological eruptions stirred into action by strong drink have aided me considerably in my efforts to reveal myself to myself.

Unfortunately, I often get into trouble when I drink, as I am always taken to be more intoxicated than I really am. The effect of alcohol upon me is never a babbling tongue or any form of unsteadiness of either limb or speech. My perception grows more keen; I observe the people about me with increasing clarity, and this causes me to behave in a strange manner, for it is not good to see people too distinctly. In brief, I blaze skyward like a rocket and am extinguished at the peak of my flight. The long, discouraging descent from life's bright-colored moment is almost unknown to me. I am spared the discomfort, and before I am cast out of Paradise, I am asleep.

Once in my life there was a moment when I felt particularly deserted and lonely. That was before I was quite two years old, at the time when my sister Agnes was born. This I was able to recall in a state of intoxication, hardly a month ago. Here is what I wrote at the time:

"Here I sit, a castaway, who has penetrated into a painful mystery. I am drunk, but that is not distressing. The painful part of it is that I am also alone. I do not drink in order to remember how lonely I have been. When I am drunk and about me sit only strangers or acquaintances whom I dislike, my nature demands that I rise from my chair and fall down in the middle of the floor with a loud noise.

They shall by no means think they can ignore me! I shall write it now while I am sitting here drunk and alone, for I am conscious of it at no other time. Always when drunk by myself, I am compelled to fight down the desire, sometimes by dint of convulsions so severe that I sway on the point of swooning. However, that too would, I suppose, be a fulfilment of this desire... ”

Ah yes, I know something when I have been drinking! And from this fact that alcohol speaks up and tells us things arises a fair amount of the general strife concerned with the bottle. A drunken man is a witness. *In vino veritas*. But the man who has the courage to think only when drunk is a pig; he is like the libertine who can only glare at others, without ever daring to glance at himself. Remorse and a sense of having sinned in one who awakens after a night of revelry is witness-dread: “God help me! Last night I said something…” A splendid aim for anyone to have is the ability to speak out frankly when sober. As it is, I have the courage to admit of my desire to fall down in public, but — I should hardly have so dared had I not both recorded it and told you so many other things before. There you have the little epileptic! Also the man who fain would swim through a bottle of whisky the long way home to childhood!

All through my schooldays I stood in utter dread of the word “swoon.” My body would grow as cold as ice with fear and shame whenever that word came up, and always it would seem to me as though it had been cast like excrement in my face. I never knew why at the time, and I was never able to reason it out for myself. Nevertheless, the sinner has become aware of his sin and of his stolen weapon in the struggle for power.

I remember one hour in school. In our reader my eye had glimpsed the word “swoon.” I sat there measuring how far ahead it lay in the text and was giddy with fear lest it should be my turn to read when we came to that awful word. I trembled and was half mad with dread. The entire room was ablaze with the searing flame of mocking eyes. At length, pale as death, I rose and received permission to leave the room. Outside in the yard, I stood by a wall and realized how impossible life really was.

It might be interesting to study the current prejudice against

egocentricity. It would seem as though the entire world order had been built up around that prejudice. Egocentricity, systematically instilled into an entire generation, might lead to any number of interesting possibilities.

# THE STRUGGLE OF PRIMITIVE MAN

I REALIZE that neither you nor anyone else will find it easy to believe that a case of brain fever was or ever could be only an attack of simple hysteria. There is even less reason to believe it in my case, inasmuch as my younger brother had also contracted brain fever and had died of it. I recall his frightful convulsions and the picture of my mother on her knees praying for him just as she had done for me. But surely you were able to observe in my own case of the disease at least a decided element of the "mysterious." Memory does not go back directly to such an early age. We resembled then altogether too little what we have later become for memory to serve us fully. But the emotions arising from our experiences we are able to arouse again. Under the stress of remembering so far back, we dredge up things which, from their external contours, are doubtless preposterous. When Father was some few months old, a horse came into his room and bit his head off. He remembered it with the utmost clarity and would laugh over it. We can be reasonably certain that no horse had ever bitten off his head; however, I still insist that he nevertheless remembered the incident with absolute correctness.

The picture, the film — these are the child's and our ancestors' form of thought. Were we to possess sufficient data, we should be able to translate Father's experience from picture-language into the language of sounds and arrive at some knowledge of what it had really been. Even so, I believe the outward incident to be entirely lacking in interest. It is in the emotions accompanying the experience that the vital truth lies.

In the hieroglyphics of the Egyptians you will find the language of pictures crystallized; in them the film has lost its erratic flight and

settled into a language of sound. On papyrus and on the face of cliffs the first films were transcribed. It is the curious blending of cellar and sky in Egyptian art that carries us away; for therein we find visionary primitive man struggling with concrete forms.

I am no philologist, but it is possible for me to grasp that the idea we have translated as: “I love you, my queen” and by which the Neo-Egyptian meant precisely this — in the earliest days of the written language was utterly beyond words to express, but had to be seen instead. And an attempt to read it aloud might possibly have resulted in something like this: “I soar on the winged horse high over the Nile.”

And, in this, one is likewise far closer to the actual experience of love than in the stiff formula: “I love you.” You know how dry and impoverished your words sound to you when you attempt to tell in your own language the action of a silent motion picture — you yourself are aware that what you are doing is only making a clumsy attempt at translation. Just what Father’s recollection of the horse which bit off his head would be if translated into written language, it is difficult to estimate. But neither is it intended that one should know the precise facts; rather it is intended that one should close one’s eyes and dream one’s way forward to the translation: “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?”

# THE THEOLOGIANS’ TERROR

FOR centuries the priest has been leasing souls from the state; to the doctor went the physical bodies. We have crude remnants of this practice to this very day: perhaps you recall the case of the clergyman who once sued a cotter in Svelvik in an attempt to collect from him eight crowns a year for pastoral care. The man had given himself all the pastoral care he desired and the minister was nonsuited. But the doctors, deprived of a very natural domain by the priests, have made no serious attempt to recapture it. They allow the priest to retain the possession of the roots of the majority of our illnesses, and the fact that the case of Storm vs. Monsen was actually allowed in court seems directly in point.

The changed circuit linking our souls with our physical ailments passes first through a dark forest where theologians skulk, with black cowls and blanched faces. It is a matter of absolute fact that the church has occupied the most strategic point in the life of the human being, that ancient no man's land whence man's terror of the dark can be directed as an effective means of control. We can well imagine the time when the naked human being would spend his nights clinging to his fellows in a tree. And one day a certain member of the group saw a way of conquering the rest; he stole away from his fellows under cover of darkness and undertook to alarm them with strange sounds which he later further undertook to interpret for them. And in the morning they all had headaches and loose bowels.

The majority of us still continue to govern through weakness. From bed we can, with justice on our side, tyrannize over an entire household. We keep on with this Sort of thing just so long as we are able to take joy in the thought of our own funeral, when all Jante will form a procession in our honor, and our obituary will appear in the paper. He who desires a belly-ache achieves one. Not one of us would fear death could we be sure that our own coffin would be allowed to stand through all eternity blocking traffic in the middle of Main Street.

# THE YOUTH-LIE

THE WOODS — they are childhood! Here I sit with closed eyes and gaze at the summer world as it appeared to us when we were children. I am unable to describe nature for you; I lost that gift when I focused my eyes upon humanity. But the woods and the plain still visit my soul like a suave and vibrant melody occasionally… Oh, glorious summer! I seem to feel myself old, so old. But only momentarily, far less frequently than formerly. It would be more truthful to declare that I have achieved youth at an age when most others have begun to convince themselves that youth has already forsaken them. Youth is something we have reason to hope for so long as we have never experienced it, and it depends upon ourselves alone whether or not we are to be disappointed. Chronological youth, of course, comes to all of us

with the passing of childhood. But that blond and blue-eyed youth which is prescribed for us in high school will never be ours and no one has ever genuinely experienced it. We are disappointed and feel that we have been swindled, just because it fails to appear. It has never lived elsewhere than in half-senile lyric poetry. Youth in terms of years is only tears and despair. Later on, conditions improve, provided we are able to see through the high-school hoax and to give up feeling cheated. True youth we shall be able to wring from life after we are half a century old. Nothing may we gain without struggle, but struggle can also yield us more than we ever dreamed of beforehand.

# NIGHT IS DECEPTIVE

ALL I have told you of the fugitive, Espen Arnakke, I have more than once attempted to present in some concise form for myself, but each time I would side-step the issue. Once I went farther than I realized. That is ten years ago now; that was the time I chose Jens Nordhammer as my point of departure. But indeed we are all prone to seek salvation through other means than truth. I once entered that statement in a day-book, or rather a night-book, for I had things to do during the daytime then other than fussing about with my inner thoughts. And do you know what pretext I found for giving up the adventure? It was very simple. I abruptly called a halt with the following sentences: “Night is deceptive. It is not well to write at night, for then one is led astray and before long finds himself lost in a mire — it is the same when one writes letters at night. One seldom decides to post them.”

I have reached the point today where it is thoroughly immaterial to me whether it be by night or day that I write.

Night is for the majority of people an unusual time. Normally they sleep it away. If ever they awaken in the night, they are at once filled with loneliness; it is still, no one comes, no one goes; it upsets the balance their lives have acquired, and their thoughts all gather to batter at the doors of dark closets where defeats are stored… We never penetrate these closets; we dare not do so, for they are sealed by a curious membrane. We do not see our defeats with full clarity,

but we are stricken down by the emotions they release. At such times the individual stands face to face with the excellent possibility that he will learn something about himself, but — he always wavers and retreats. We construe irrational explanations, or rescue ourselves quite without attempting to explain; we simply come to the conclusion that night is deceptive and feel a little ashamed of ourselves for having yielded to sentimentality.

That night is deceptive is a theory we have no need to examine more closely, so long as it is merely a theory. But what is sentimentality? We operate with a large array of conceptions which are unexplained and which we employ in the same manner as a rabbit employs a bush. To be sentimental is one of the most pitiful things in the world, we believe, for everyone says so with a pertinacity so fanatical that this ought in itself to arouse our suspicions.

# EMBRYO WITNESSES

THE SENTIMENTAL man is the one who does not pause to stick his finger in the ground and sniff it to tell where he is, but immediately begins to express himself in such a manner that one is able to spot him as a witness. And so soon as our witness-dread flares up in us, we promptly see to it that the fellow is strangled. But the sentimentalist is only an embryo witness, so to speak, and that is why we are able to handle him so deftly. He approaches problems blindfold, and usually he will flee like a hare the moment his eye falls on them. The sentimental ones are cast out and form independent organizations — charitable and humane societies and those curious clubs made up of clergymen's widows — and in these they toddle about each other in common, blind amazement. They stand still; they are at the doors to their dark closets, but they make no attempt to enter. As a matter of fact, there may even be good cause to reprimand the sentimentalists for lacking the ability to stabilize themselves. They have abandoned one form without daring to reject it and without daring to look for a new. But, in their very sterility, they have yet gone a step farther than the formalists who scorn them.

Nor are we entirely unjust in our refusal to associate with the sentimental man, though it is more ourselves than he whom we truly fear. “Fear the soul and worship it not, for it is like unto a vice.”

Dread of becoming sentimental is the dread of taking a first step of departure from stiff formalism. Once it was highly amusing to us that we should be expected to learn to walk. Now we insist convulsively that we can walk, and therefore make absolutely no attempt to begin back at the beginning.

# CANDIDATE FOR HEAVEN

BUT it was perhaps well that I called a halt when I did, for I was lacking in courage to open my dark closet wide, and I expounded a fair amount of metaphysics before I finally made the attempt. I was especially taken up with the theory that Jens Nordhammer would not permit me to die — I had as yet committed far from all the evil he had laid out for me. I fancied that I was possessed of an intense desire to die, but lacked permission to do so. I was a person, I realized, who would be far better off dead, but whom the spirits of evil had required to live. That was a rare version of the notion of Providence, alleged to guard our lives. Whether I really believed in all this or not is difficult to say just now, but I was making the attempt, at least, and it would have been a terrible thing had I succeeded in erecting a cosmos on such a basis. A gigantically inflated ego is, of course, here implied, though it is of no greater proportions than that which Christians exhibit. There ought to be limits to one’s belief in ultra-mundane powers active on one’s behalf, when every hour brings home to us new evidence of the icy indifference of nature toward the individual and of its sole concern for the carrying out of a principle throughout a whole series of generations. I wonder if it might not be this very indifference that causes us to strive so wildly. Is it that which influences to a large extent both a Mohammed and a Skyldfri Sidenius? We refuse utterly to be what we are. We insist upon trying to break from the chain. This is impossible. But we persist in our battle over the impossible, from suckling infancy onward; and is it conceivable that we shall ever abandon the fight? What else had Skyldfri ever done than

struggle along without ceasing on the same unvarying level of childhood? It is easy to say that she is the crudest individual ever made in the likeness of a human being and that she ought to have been shot these many years ago. In the first place, this explains nothing; in the second, she is by no means a rare specimen. Some people will doubt that a Skyldfri Sidenius could ever have existed, though she may be counted in hundred-thousand lots.

# SKYLDFRI, THE ANALYST

You see, in company with others, Skyldfri never for a moment allowed it to be forgotten that she was the leading lady. This may appear grotesque, for she was before all else a vulgar boor. She never hesitated to give her hostess lessons in table manners and she would raise particular hell were she not given the last word in every household matter. “I’m much more experienced and I’m used to having it this way.” It never occurred to her that the mistress of the house might be used to other ways. Were some guest to be shown particular attention, Skyldfri would soon drive him away. With the faintest suspicion that we had for a single second thought of anything other than her glorification, she would behave so daffily as to make any attempt at description fall fiat. After she had undertaken to scorn Gjatrid’s table, her dress, my manners, and the striking filthiness of our house, it is possible that words would fail me. It was unendurable! Was I to have no respect accorded me? She complained of the children’s conduct and of their manner of addressing their elders. And how was it we talked to them? We might have taught them at least a smattering of respect for older people!

On this point I usually attempted to raise a slight objection. I would do so politely, of course, although I knew full well that she ought to have been cloven in two with an ax. But we always got the worst of it, of course. Wasn’t at least a minimum of peace possible when living in Jante? And we had had the worst of things all our lives.

But objections always gave rise to catastrophes — or to one, at least. No Skyldfri is ever resourceful. She would begin to bawl at the top of her lungs, snuffling and slobbering like a huge calf. Oscar

would ask me how I had had the heart to hurt her feelings so. Skyldfri would set her several hundred pounds into vibration, would, by way of experiment, bay a few times like a hound and then settle down to the blubbering roars of a harpooned whale. Possibly I have failed in my description, but if I have succeeded, the effect is bound to be repulsive.

Like all other Skyldfris, she would end by forgiving us and would begin all over again, as though nothing had happened — exactly at the point where she had left off. And if even this failed to move us? Then, of course, it would be hard to answer back, and Oscar would glare at us severely. “There, there, little Skyldfri! They really mean you no harm! You should remember, Espen, that Skyldfri is very sensitive! You ought to give that some thought.” Those were his very words on one occasion. I simply stared. My word! He actually believed them! And I must admit that Oscar Sidenius was no idiot. “My little flower!” he would say, stroking her hand.

The Skyldfris are the simplest people in the world, but nevertheless they are not to be embraced by thought. For that matter, not by arms, either. Conceptions such as stupidity and cleverness bore no relationship to Skyldfri Sidenius. She was not exactly an atavism; she was rather a mutation perched on a collateral branch which had cracked under her weight.

A Jante person would perceive spontaneously that she occupied the stronger position, that she was invincible. You are of a different breed of people; to you I can only state the facts. She never became as powerful as Oline, for she had not fastened herself upon us until after we had been, for a long time, grown up. I am telling you all this to bring out the point that her weapon in the struggle for power was the same as that with which little children are forever experimenting. Aside from her shocking corpulence, she had never developed beyond the two-year-old stage.

# FRÖKEN NIBE BELIEVED THAT SOMETHING COULD BE

# CORRECT

BUT I must return to my statement that I ceased my inquiries ten years ago, after having written about Jens Nordhammer. For I recall now that there was something else which contributed a further reason why I should desist. It was Skyldfri's enormous pride in her ability to speak correctly. She would have a correction to offer the very moment that any of us chanced to open his mouth. Her own speech was perfectly ghastly, but she had nevertheless taken it into her head that it was correct. I remember in particular certain of her verb forms; Heaven alone knows where she had acquired them; they were so astounding because they were absolutely of her own fabrication. You "kape" still just in order to tease me! This alone is of but little significance; the main thing was that she considered herself a mistress of polished speech. When my memory fastened upon this, I was at once aware that dread of expressing myself incorrectly was what kept me from writing at that time. In "correct" language I was unable to express myself as I wished, and if at any time I did succeed in setting down a revealing line, I would immediately regard it as merely sentimental. I had an enormous respect for commas, orthography, and such things, and I knew perfectly well what was correct. But when a person sits down and thinks of writing according to the doctrines of Fröken Nibe and is unaware that he is making an attempt to write of the three first years of his existence, the result is what is to be expected. I knew in advance that whatever I wrote would prove thin and insubstantial. Pen in hand, I fell down miserably in school. Langauge became a word machine beside things. Words and life were two things which bore absolutely no relationship one to the other. It was a hallucinist who was sitting there noting down formalism. The word was a pale spirit standing behind the individual, with a pale seeming-life which was something entirely different from that of the individual.

We are educated in formalism, leading to a maidenly attitude toward the true essence of life. Over the written word hovers a phantom Fröken Nibe who believed that a word can be used *correctly* and that there are things which can be said and things which cannot be said. Both statements are patently so much folderol. In print we have but learned to express our

interdependence. Somewhere in my own pale writings I jotted down: “like hell,” and I remember how proud I was that I had dared. It may seem curious that a man whose past embraced deeds considerably worse should have had to call upon his last reserve of courage simply to write “hell” on a scrap of paper. However, this was, after all, no mean accomplishment, either. The timid soul is prone to proceed, hidden from sight, behind the iron wall of formalism. He takes refuge in the most proper forms the world has to offer —namely, the language which all Nibes undertake to teach. My Nibe knew that the word “hell” was not to be written, for not even the shadow of such a word was to be found in any copybook. One angry opponent of the modern school once said: “Children, sitting there writing their own language!”

Yes, and why the hell not?

By the time the darkness had so far rolled away that the entire dull race of men had learned to write, there had also grown up a formalism more rigid than anything anyone had ever seen before.

I, for one, rejected formalism. It offered me no escape.

# INTOXICATION, NIGHT, AND MUSIC

THE CHILD, like the Negro, is a natural singer. What I speak of tonight, more than anything which has gone before, ought to be a sound-film. We have not forgotten our earliest years, but we are unable to manage the translation of their contents into the language of today. In music we find something of our earliest childhood. It is of childhood they sing in the groves of Hawaii or in the jungles of Malacca. Music and night follow the same route to the human heart. In music and in alcoholic intoxication we are carried downward to our level of existence at the time we lay in the cradle and adored ourselves. Intoxication, night, and music — each is a person who casts himself to earth and shrieks his own name. Look upon the peasant boy whiling away the evening hours with his accordion; he is absorbed, lost to the world. He has found himself.

There was no music when my baby brother died or when he was buried. But when, a short time ago, I was speaking of the glorious summer in the land of childhood, it was as though a great orchestra were flooding the world with sound; and all the many instruments were chanting of little brother. And when I said I could not describe nature, the truth was that I found myself unable to reproduce the voices of the orchestra. I am, of course, keenly aware of the landscapes as they appeared, and I could, in short order, acquaint you with the geography of the world I knew, but what purpose would that serve when one becomes aware of what lies beneath and what the true Meaning of nature-lyricism is? When Mother's breast and Mother's door drift before our eyes, we take out the violin and strum it softly, while we speak of the sunsets in the land of childhood. The effect may be beautiful and we may enjoy it for a time. But once we have convinced ourselves that Mother is really dead, we brush the hair from our forehead and enter the world of today. The birch puts forth its leaves without us, and the chaffinch will not be silenced by the tones of our violin.

# THE BOY AND THE TREE

THERE is one long and varied strain which breathes of an oak which stood outside our house back home in Jante. It was quite young; the oak and I were of the same age. And I had made a pact with the oak: in the same year we had come into the world, and in the same year we should leave it. During the winter I pitied its naked branches and its bark, which seemed so blue and cold. When I grew up, I would build a house for the oak. During the summer I would wash its leaves, one by one, when they became soiled with dust from the road. But I did not like to have anyone see me doing this. The acorns from the tree I would hide away in boxes; during the winter I ate them and to me they tasted good. The tree developed with remarkable rapidity and soon it was fairly tall, its branches firm...

It was from this tree that I hanged myself.

# WE SHOULD DIE THE SAME

# YEAR

UPON leaving home after confirmation, I acquired a close friend whose name was Villiam Stad. He was older than I. As time went on, I was filled with a growing conviction that he and I should some day die in the same year. I clung tightly to this belief, and hidden within it lay a form of romantic love. One evening, while Villiam was repairing a roof, he fell and was killed. I was beside myself with sorrow, but not until the following day did it come to mind that my own days were now numbered, too, for the accident had occurred in the middle of December. I was wretchedly unhappy, but most of all because Villiam was dead. On New Year's Eve I fell into a little stream, and the current swept me under a mill-wheel. This I clutched in my frantic grasp, but it was fifteen minutes at least before help arrived. I caught a slight cold, but suffered no other ill effect. For a long time afterwards I was firmly convinced that it had been Jens Nordhammer who had sent people out to look for me.

After this a long time passed, and then one day I found two acorns on my seat in the train. Perhaps some child had forgotten to pick them up. I thought of my own children, for I had two. And the thought came over me, with singular emotional heat, that I should plant these two acorns for my own children, and that the trees should be of an age with the children. I hid the nuts in my satchel, and the notion persisted for a long time in my mind, even after I had arrived home. But then the nuts disappeared. I searched all evening long and all the next day. But they had vanished completely. It was impossible to forget them. Even today I cannot entirely rid myself of the feeling that there was something decidedly uncanny about those two acorns which disappeared.

# SENTIMENTALITY IS THE BEGINNING

THERE are persons who go about cherishing the belief that they have never been sentimental, and an even greater number who go about convinced that only they themselves have been so. Those

who really are so all the time are another case entirely.

If I am unable to drop this question of sentimentality, it is both because I believe it to be an indistinct manifestation of our earliest childhood, and also because I myself once yielded to its grasp. All elucidation begins sentimentally. This applies to both great and small. Harriet Beecher Stowe sat down and had a good cry over poor old Uncle Tom, and she made the entire world weep with her. Her book was food for thought until, at length, the system was overthrown. The labour movement was sentimental to begin with, but has since grown to assume menacing proportions. *Werther* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are two execrable books, yet once they bore a terrific punch. Each was written by a person who was at heart an active sentimentalist (a campaigner), and each stirred thousands of people to get together in a movement — far beyond all expectations of the books themselves, which rapidly became classic curiosities. Significant work at once assumes a vital context and is forgotten as soon as its usefulness has been achieved, after which it remains as a monument to human frailty. It is with full justice on their side that people pass the classics by, the so-called great ones, Homer and Shakespeare. What good are statues to us in the midst of a raging fight? There is no nourishment to be derived from them and they are left to sleep away time on their pedestals. *Werther* was a greater achievement than *Faust*, for it goaded a whole generation on into the future. *Faust* leads us astray by ruse from the central combat and remains solely as a source of livelihood for the assistant professors. That excellent service is lacking in all intrinsic vitality.

# A SENTIMENTAL GENTLEMAN

I SHALL now tell you of a sentimental gentleman. You will readily assume, no doubt, that he is myself, but he is not, and, moreover, he is dead. Probably it would be accurate to say that at one time I must have resembled him in one way or another; otherwise I should not choose to discuss him now.

It was during my three blind years, toward their very beginning — shall I never succeed in seeing to the bottom of them? Not now; perhaps not for some years to come…

I had vowed never to set foot on a ship's deck again, but after a few months had passed, I nevertheless did so. When one becomes sufficiently hungry, it matters not in the least what former vows one has taken. You can observe this as clearly as you may desire all about you, now that the world is out of balance: Fine conservative people in the nations scattering the globe today demand for themselves such measures as they were denouncing as immoral not so long ago. Morals are always erected by people who know where their next meal is coming from But everything goes, for ourselves, when we are without even a biscuit to nibble.

The vessel was small and there were only four of us in the crew. The sentimentalist's name was Evald and his job, among other things, was to prepare the grub, Which was a decidedly simple task, as we were quite without fuel for the cook-stove. If we ever happened to catch sight of an empty barrel or something of the kind adrift in the sea, we would alter our course at once and make after it. It often seemed to me that our one mission in life was to go cruising about the Atlantic in quest of wood. We got along as well as conditions would permit, but it was a dog's life.

I had been aboard several weeks before I had my first chat with Evald. We were both on the alert, for we had not exactly become friends at first sight. One of the reasons for this probably was that, feeling myself perfectly secure now that we were well out to sea, I felt I could likewise put on a few airs, as I was the most travelled and therefore the most interesting member of the crew. Evald had thus been shoved into the background, and this he resented. But one day, when the weather was tolerably fair, we managed a conversation aft by the wheel.

Now that we had at last broken the ice and were talking together, Evald waxed eager indeed. It is not easy for me to repeat what he said, for his words were evasive and full of hazy references to matters which he maintained were too — hm, too so-and-so to be mentioned to any living soul. After which he promptly related them, all the same, punctuating his remarks with several gloomy reflections on the futility of remaining alive.

As a rule, it is the poorest thinkers of all who are accorded the distinction of being truth-seekers, for the reason that they justify

the impression that they will never say anything stirring. In order to soothe people, they provide themselves with blinders on which they have written:

“What is Life?”

Evald resembled Obstfelder and others like him who believe that the way to solve a problem is to restate it in silly language. Obviously the purpose of this sort of thing is to make a man seem interesting to himself; he erects problems where none exist, and he really desires nothing solved. The sentimentalist has reached the point where he has succeeded in frightening himself and starts laying down a smoke screen to hide behind.

The effect of Evald’s many lyric quotations was highly disturbing, for they never had any traceable connection with anything at all. He would refer constantly to blind fate, the riddle of existence, and always seemed severely at odds with fate. Perhaps his words did make sense, but the impression I have of them is that of an evenly boiling mush.

Back home Evald had known a decidedly lovely girl named Meta. She and Evald had entered into an arrangement which smacked strongly of betrothal, and, so far as I could make out, both had been well versed in the art of staring at the full moon and reciting poetry. But then she had informed him that all would have to be over between them. According to his statement, she had availed herself of a curious form of burial service to communicate the news. “I thought I should die,” Evald told me. “And why, oh, why?” I asked her. But I knew very well that no answer was to be found in the world. She looked at me long and said: “Life is so hard. It cannot be otherwise.” And Evald — he had gone home and packed his bag and had gone forth into the world to fill it with his woe.

So it goes! Yes, but does it, now, really? I believe that, outside of literature, two people are likely to plague each other and torture each other in divers ways long before they finally draw apart. But that was how he reported it to me. It is a common tendency on the part of all sentimentalists to view their own lives through what they have read and heard instead of peering at them directly. That is, as it were, the fine point of truth-seeking.

The following year he had received a letter from Meta. Tragically she had broken off with him and tragically she would resume. Well, those were hardly Evald's exact words!

I asked him the obvious question, but Evald bowed his head. "I never answered her," he said.

I was not stupid enough to fail to see at once that he lied. Obviously, he had answered her and right soulfully, at that. Nevertheless, I asked him why he had not done so.

After the necessary preliminary flourish Evald told me that he had contracted a disease in Greece. He did not come right out and say that he had visited a whore-house in Athens; oh no, there had to be the usual flowery confusion of meaningless blather. He had reached the point where nothing mattered in the world. And then he had fallen ill. Incurably. Syphilis. Had discovered it too late. Hadn't mattered, though. And then had come the letter from Meta.

Is it not true that this had been indeed tragic? However, fate dealt Evald a villainous blow, which is interesting only in that it revealed that Meta had never existed at all and that he was free from any sign of syphilis. He committed suicide, and the amazing thing is that he was sincerely prompted to do so because of his disease and his love for Meta. Mad? He was not mad. He was sentimental. He had gone about with young Werther's hair shirt in his hands, but in the end he had fitted it onto the wrong dummy. Meta, his disease — what were they? Something lay beneath them which was cause enough for suicide.

# I SHALL NOT LET YOU GO

AND I shall tell you of John Wakefield —stop at this very point and tell you of the man who made me sentimental, and who dragged me from one humility to another, and who hated me because he himself was sentimental no longer. I stood in relation to him precisely as, shortly afterwards, Evald stood in relation to me. But I was more meek than Big John had been; otherwise Evald would have killed me rather than himself. And, like his own forgotten

past, I dogged John Wakefield's heels: I shall never let you go until you have blessed me!

And I kept my word. I shall continue to hold fast to him long years after I have lost my yearning for his benediction.

He was a dashing chap, a thumping black-haired giant, intelligent in his way, and strong as an ox. His face was exceedingly handsome, though disfigured by a perpetual scowling sneer. And when we met again in Misery Harbour, his talk was of Eve, always of Eve...

The worst part of my recollection of him is the appalling flow of blood. It was then I grasped the ancient words: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground!" It formed a veritable lake. Often, upon looking at a person today, my mind still focuses itself upon the thought of the bucketfuls of blood the human body contains. And I feel a sense of dread at the thought that leaks may spring...

For only a few weeks did I actually fear detection; by that time I had already reached Nova Scotia and had put to sea on a ship. But the urge to play with fire never left me, possibly because I felt so secure. The cunning way is the dangerous, but I had become a murderer without being cunning and without possessing the strength which childish souls believe it requires.

During the period which followed, however, while I was unconsciously seeking an explanation, I was really on the right track, the way chosen by all who desire an explanation without quite daring to seek it: I became so sentimental that this, too, cried out to high heaven. But my need of finding an explanation was not as yet sufficiently great. I went no farther than did Sigbjorn Obstfelder. And I knew even more. Moreover, he, too, identified himself with a priest in A Priest's Diary.

Many baneful influences may be traced back to those three years; for example, my horror of fat, flabby women. You see, there is too much blood in such reservoirs, and what if one were suddenly taken with the desire to test the correctness of one's estimate? Possibly they contain not a drop more than others...

# ROMANTICISM AND A PADDED CELL

WHAT'S that you say, too hard on myself? This time it is you who are being sentimental. It is out of the question for anyone ever to be too hard on himself. Such we may be, from prejudice, on each other, but hard I on ourselves? Never! A man may strive to be so, but all too soon he will be joyously persuaded that he has already achieved his end. The fact is that, concerning himself, no human being has ever uttered a single word which was not spoken in self-defense. No, I have only taken the consequences of the fact that it is impossible to slander anyone other than oneself.

Hysteria, romanticism, obscurantism, and sentimentality — these are the first three years of one's life, which people are convinced they are unable to remember, whereas, each time they become lost in one of these states of being, they not only remember but become *babes* in arms once again.

I discovered no way out through sentimentality. Later I took Jens Nordhammer by the hand and made the attempt by means of obscurantism, romanticism, and hysteria. Sheer reason is the last road the human mind chooses to follow. For that leads forth to the goal whence one visions Fairyland, the woods, Paradise, and suffers the desire to turn back to nature — the perilous desire which made Evald a highly sentimental suicide.

As a little one, I would often weep over my own suicide. Against sentimental people one must be on one's guard; they are on the road in more than one sense — they are, for one thing, on the road to murder. Let someone but laugh a little, and you will see the sentimentalist run amuck. Most frequently his cheeks will flame red with fear. He will imagine he has surrendered to others what he himself dares not look at.

But there was a time when the sentimentalist did some strange things which might have told him something, had he been gifted with the capacity to understand. Toward the close of my school

career I used to be filled with wistful joy whenever it would rain. Just inside the open door of the woodshed I would sit gazing out into the downpour; a full half-day I might remain thus, my heart meanwhile lush with a rare sense of ecstasy. So significant to me were these quiet hours by myself that today they appeal to me as having been some of the happiest my childhood ever knew. One day a couple of years ago I suddenly recaptured the mood and spent an entire day in an open door, safe and dry, while outside it was raining torrents.

After I had left home, there awakened in me a desire for a cushioned room. Naturally, I had never before had a room to myself, but now, it would seem, I had become over-pretentious on this score. Mine was to be a room entirely padded with cushions — floor, walls, door, and ceiling. It was to be only a tiny cubbyhole, without windows. My one thought was how comfortable I would find it upon returning home to spend the evening transcribing the insect book or reading the *Decameron*.

That I should have no bodily use for the cushions on ceiling and walls probably did not occur to me. And I had no doubt in the world but that some day such a room would be mine.

Many years have now passed since I abruptly gave up longing for an upholstered room, which had suddenly taken on the semblance of a padded cell.

It is a little lyricist, a little Narcissus who desires to sit yielding to elegy in a cell. It is the monk, the refugee from the world, who has returned to nature in a padded cell.

The sentimentalist has fond intercourse with the fancy of father and mother both coming to grief in some horrible accident and of his thus being left alone in the world. Christmas-magazine authors favor this theme. One desires to be alone, to govern one's own life, and much else, but dares not think the thought through to a logical conclusion. One stops short at that half-way station known as the sentimental dream.

The man who stands in the very midst of such a dream is in no way aware of it. I observed a remarkable example of this in the United

States not so long ago. The Americans, as a whole, have not progressed beyond this half-way station and have there raised a nation built on sentimental brutality.

# PATRICIDE

I ONCE spent a fortnight in Detroit without knowing a soul in the place. The result was two weeks of comprehensive newspaper-reading. Nothing is so educational as is the reading of the daily papers, since their reporting of the news, for financial reasons, caters to the social majority, and is likewise, for the same reasons, undertaken by staffs drawn exclusively from the majority. The human being reveals himself stark naked in the columns of the press, often with his skin peeled off as well, a clean-cut anatomical plate. During a murder trial you can definitely count on both the usual sentimental blather and a photograph of the meat-ax with which the vicious and bestial criminal split the poor old lady's skull. With tears in our eyes, we study the meat-ax, and digest our dinner all the better for it.

The big story blazing in all the Detroit papers while I was there was nothing less than the Riddle of the Century! You will never fail to hear mention made of some utterly baffling mystery the very moment people find themselves in the proximity of some situation such as they, for personal reasons, are best fitted to interpret. Our society is infested with riddles of criminal psychology, the shibboleth employed without fail with regard to criminals whose mental processes are as obvious as the links in a battle-ship's anchor chain. For it is then that terror strikes home and we yell: "Riddle, riddle!" until we are hoarse and blind.

The Riddle of the Century is a stock label I have observed on any number of curious packages. While I was in Detroit, it had been affixed to a young boy who had slain his own father. If this act, as an act, be in any way baffling, at least the mystery cannot be tagged to a single specific century; probably it was rather the particular set of circumstances surrounding the murder that caused our American friends to lose no time in whooping: "Riddle, riddle!"

The boy had been living in a house with both his parents. His father had been bedridden with tuberculosis and had occupied a third-floor room.

One evening the boy returned home and discovered a strange man in bed with his mother. He was badly shaken and, for a moment, was at a loss to think what on earth to do. But after a little, he stole upstairs to his father, who was asleep, and sent a revolver bullet through his brain.

To the police the boy stated that he had shot his father in order to spare him the sorrow of learning what his mother had done.

The European will, I believe, grasp the boy's motive at once, even though he may consider it a mistake on the part of the boy to have yielded to such an impulse. I have many times rehearsed the facts of the case on this side of the Atlantic, and on not one occasion did my listeners fail to comprehend the boy's line of reasoning. But the Americans, up to their ears in all that tends to produce situations of this very nature, were entirely at a loss to see into it when one finally arose. "Riddle!" they shrieked, rocking the entire nation with the effect of their massed confusion. Whole galleries of prominent attorneys were interviewed. "Riddle!" they all said, "the most baffling mystery the United States has experienced since the turn of the century!" One could not pick up a paper which did not commit itself to the proposition that it would have been fairly understandable had the boy murdered his mother but to kill his father, his innocent, bedridden father! Riddle! And, to be sure, the priests put in their public appearance, like earthworms after a rain, and they revealed a greater wisdom than had the lawyers, in so far as they immediately turned the case to good personal account. They proclaimed that it was all the result of atheism. The father had not believed in God. Moreover, their shrill screeches were willingly taken up by others: "God's Word well-nigh falls on deaf ears, here in the United States!" Why, of course, in America, where the people blindly root around in the earth at the back-to-nature level, where religious sects spring into existence like white mice, and where every newspaper has a staff astrologer! However, every normal person is bound to have some religion. In America it is hardly likely that either God or the gods are homeless; America is the land of

religious freedom, but woe be unto him who fondles no fetish! For, after all, it is hardly the purpose of religious freedom to cultivate a doubt that there is anything at all to be found in the grab-bag. If so, one suddenly perceives that the American has got himself into a worse trap than the one which gripped the legs of the European during the Thirty Years' War. He makes more noise than the hyena.

But I recalled something that time in Detroit, an old story from Jante, when Anders Null and I, in the woods, had pursued some girls in bathing. The story leaked out and had become so generally known that I was afraid it might come to the ears of my parents. "When I see that about to happen," I thought, "I shall kill both Father and Mother. I could do it in such a way that neither of them will know what was upon them, and afterwards I'll take my punishment. But they must never be grieved to know what a bad boy I have been. Better to take the punishment, better that I myself should endure grief at their loss." And there was another time when an appalling rumour entered our little world — a rumour that my brother Janus had drunk some beer. I was overcome by soul-shattering dread that the old people might come to know of it and — a Janus, Janus, how could you! At that moment the murderer had again sprung into being: "Never must it reach their ears, never!" I saw them weeping as though their hearts would break… No, better that I should kill them! My beloved father and mother were never to know how wicked their son Janus had been…

There must be a diabolical urge behind such a bloody form of benevolence. But that the wish to murder one's parents may appear as a self-imposed sacrifice, in order to do them a favour — who have we to thank for that? It is to the terrorism of our early training that our thanks must go, for it is that which provides us with the material and the excuse in such a way that the ancient murder-wish is cloaked behind a spirit of sentimental benevolence: to spare our parents sorrow! The wish might have remained dormant throughout all eternity had not our terroristic education provided it with such splendid new garments. As soon as our minds are capable of grasping anything at all, we are reared in the thought that the most important thing in life is to act only according to the wishes of our parents — we are their property; we must spare them sorrow. But the manner of sparing sorrow would vary from home to home in

Jante. One would bring sorrow to his father by becoming a total abstainer, another by failing to become one. Our own father would have never forgiven us — so we believed — had we attended a mission service. The children of Jens Hansen were compelled by terror to attend them regularly. The old people would lead us to believe that it is utterly beyond them to navigate their own existence without our audible assistance. That is a criminal lie, and hell is its unfailing consequence. But they themselves believe in it and thereby they produce sorrows quite mechanically. It never occurs to them that it would be better for them to let well enough alone. It is another case of Bastian and the bogy man; we believe in the menace with evangelical fervour and behave toward our children like out-and-out dunderheads, to the point that the little folk in their own sub-world are so firmly convinced of the pitiable weakness of our natures that they feel it would be a kindness to murder us. As a matter of fact, we deserve nothing better, for we are, in most cases, guilty of actually having begrudged the child his very existence.

And what is parental grief? What was it that the people of Jante gave their children to understand would lead to broken hearts? The mystery of the pint of beer!

It is a grave error, both toward our children and toward ourselves, to subdivide life into joys and sorrows. Each element is flavoured with the other and it is indeed only a question of time when we will be unable to avoid a single one of life's buffets. But nothing seems too base when it is a question of tyrannizing over children. Until the child acts as did the boy in Detroit. To spare his parents sorrow, and at the same time to realize an ancient subconscious desire.

# THE LONGING FOR ADAMSEN'S BARN

A LITTLE of everything is concealed in the sentimentalist. He desires to sit alone in his padded cell, but, even so, is not entirely able to abandon the struggle for power, although it was from it alone he sought refuge in such a cell. He emigrates, possibly from

the struggle for Power, and yet you find him talking nonsense on a Saturday night in Arizona. Far away now are the dear ones back home...

The sentimentalist clearly shows his face aboard ship on the high seas; conditions there are exactly right for to burst into full bloom. Loneliness at sea is like that of night itself, since it is considered a disgrace to write letters. The sailor is made to fall back upon himself, and his ultimate reaction is jargon at one end of the scale and obscurantism at the other. He tumbles backward through the ages and plunges headlong into Noah's Flood. He is alone, living in an ancient world not to be described in words. Jens Nordhammer and the Klabautermann become living realities. You may rest assured that, in his breast, the Word of God assumes infinite proportions.

Elegy, lyricism, and whatever else may now be found concealed in sentimentality — all is but longing for Adamsen's barn. Youth's romantic longings, interspersed with dreams of lost Atlantis, are but longings for a place he broke faith with, a place where the air was thick and muggy. With sobs in our throats, we give way to poetry on the subject of our lost Paradise: Ah, never, never, never, shall we find our way thither again!

But, actually, we have no more business in such a fool's Paradise than we have in lost Atlantis. Once we are mature, the world, with us aboard, sails on through space, a vast and luminous globe, freighted with cities and forests and swarming with life. Let only invalids seek the padded cell, the church, and Adamsen's barn.

# THE ONE WE LOVE BEST WE SLAY IN NO MAN'S LAND

I SAID yesterday that I would talk about earliest childhood. You expected perhaps only a long series of recollections relating back to that period? Some there are, but when we lie in the cradle, we do not possess the same form of comprehension we later acquire. Life then is static condition. It is not a sequence of events. It is this static

condition that we are unable to recall outright, but that, in a quite literal sense, we recapture when we find ourselves halted in the middle of a stride — in sentimentality. And it is over this condition that tenor reigns supreme. The person who no longer finds himself in this brainless condition is a person who no longer permits himself to be terrorized. But in that gloomy no man's land we crawl from hole to hole and encounter the bloodiest of hand-to-hand fighting. The one we love best we slay in no man's land — without knowing it.

# ONE MUST MIND ONE'S WORK

MY brother Janus was a keen chap; his thoughts were not encompassed by the horizon of Jante. Early in life he enshrouded himself in an attitude of silence toward his brothers. Even so, he would occasionally open up, and each instance of this kind I recall with pleasure.

After confirmation it was his fate to be apprenticed to a tailor under a five-year contract. Tailors, too, are necessary in the world, and Janus probably imagined that he might develop a liking for this trade. He had no real knowledge of what he was doing, however, was aware only that it was a grand feeling to be through with school and Confirmation, to be a grown-up youth on his way to mastering a trade. And so he was bound to the tailor's bench for a period of five years… He never touched needle or thread after the five years were over.

It is all well and good that a lad should take up a trade.

But he should not be put in chains, for five years amount to a human generation when one is fourteen. Every human being is entitled to some little chance in life. It was soon obvious that Janus detested the tailor's bench and all that pertained to the trade of tailoring. That his master was an imbecile creature was no consolation, either. But here Father stepped in with the words which life had taught him: "One's word is one's word, and one must mind one's work." Never had Father been able to forget his own father. Thus do successive generations oscillate from one extreme to

the other. Janus had looked out across those five long years and, once the doors of the tailor shop had swung shut on him, he had probably felt much as one serving a life term in Akershus before a year had passed. And he committed the grave sin against the Holy Ghost: he bought himself a pint of beer and gulped it down. With amazement he observed that the world did not immediately fly out of joint, so he ran away from Jante.

That morning I was soon aware that a strange mood had settled over the house, though I made but little of it, since the fact that I did not see Janus about was in no way singular — he had to be at work in the tailor shop at six o'clock. But when at dinner time he had not returned home, I inquired. "Janus will not be here to dinner," Father said. More than that I was unable to find out. The mystery deepened, for that evening Father left town by train. I was then suddenly aware that Mother had been crying all day, and, after much urging, I finally pried out of her what the trouble was. It appealed to me at once as the saddest situation in the world. I lay awake crying most of that night. I lacked capacity at that time to understand anything further than that Janus had grieved his parents.

Grief be bothered! The boy had fled from years of hard labour in a tailor shop. Flight was his only means of escape, and we ought all to have wished him Godspeed. Mother told me and repeated to me at least twenty times, as I lay weeping in bed, the reason why Janus had done what he did. "So it goes when children become wicked in their hearts!" she said.

This was splendid consolation. And she did not mean in the least what she said. But Janus had done something out of the ordinary, and that was wholly taboo. The point of her remark was directed more at me than at Janus; the terror was on the loose again — I was not to repeat what Janus had done. The result has been excellent indeed: I have been a knock-about throughout my entire career! Injunctions are meant to be violated; that is their innermost purpose. The majority of them otherwise make no sense. For then one may stretch forth his arms to terror revived and seek his sin's forgiveness.

Janus was yanked home. Father was shrewd enough to know

intuitively whence Janus had fled — to a city where two of the older children were employed. To him this had represented the great wide world, and thither Janus had unerringly directed his steps. Touching homecoming. Coffee and cake. Father had purchased an elegant walking-stick for Janus.

But if Janus had committed a wrong by running away, it was a far worse wrong to have fetched him back home. He probably came to regard this as a defeat far worse than that of confirmation. His likeness to the prodigal son was enough to cause every right-thinking Jante man to shun him as one suffering from the seven-years' itch. That Janus, of all my immediate family, was, even so, the one most successful in freeing his life from restriction is due entirely to his own nature. He was always able to form a resolution and was never content with merely saying that he hoped for the best. As a rule, he was successful, too, in so far as he was able to perceive, and that is no easy task.

# WHEN CHILDREN MISBEHAVE

A YEAR or so ago I heard something which caused me to remember the expression on my mother's face the day that Janus ran away. And I strained harder than ever before to recall what she had said that day — for I had just learned that my mother was a runaway herself. One morning, without a word, she had left her parents' home and they had never seen her again.

# DEATH AND LAZINESS

HAS it ever occurred to you that all sentimentalists are lazy? The sentimentalist dares not think, of course; but he dares not work, either, for that might possibly give him an idea. He reads nothing, aside from Obstfelder and Pilatus, and from this fare one is not likely to become precisely omniscient. The terrifically, profound sentimentalist lays about him a barrage of book-titles and obscure quotations, but cunningly manages to skirt all true literature. In secret he rubs noses with Allers. On guard over his laziness, he posts the conviction that he is striving to scale the heights.

It is obvious that the sentimentalist's idiotic wish to die is a coalition between his innate laziness and his urge to appear interesting. It is so sorrowful and touching to die and, inasmuch as he does not believe in downright out-and-out death, he fancies that he himself will, in some mysterious manner, be present at his own funeral to lick his chops over the way the rest of us wail and carry on. Afterwards the lazy lout will lie snoring in his grave throughout the day, and at night find it possible to prowl about in the form of an interesting ghost without the tedious necessity of stirring his fat behind.

The situation is such that the stress of difficult circumstance is able to drive the human being backward to an archaic stage of development; at such times he seeks his way back to an ancient dug-out far behind the front line of the present. When a person does so with his entire personality, those about him are able to perceive his neurosis. "Genuine" sentimentality is found in the cooing infant in its cradle, and it is not so many years ago that I allowed myself to drift back almost to that stage. Sentimentality —death, the cradle, laziness, flight from truth and battle.

# IN THE MUSEUM

ONCE we were decidedly in a bad way. The bottom had fallen out of the family exchequer. Food and shelter had to be provided for my children, and somehow were provided, but the state of affairs we found ourselves in was actually of the worst. During the winter we had been on the point of freezing to death. Well, the human individual keeps forever hoping for something to turn up, and so indeed it did for us, at last. I found a job as a guard in a museum. There, for almost two years, I went parading about with a hexagonal cap on my head and a long-tailed coat hanging from my shoulders. The Pay was not big, but it was ample to keep us alive. The a worst part of it was when friendly tourists would undertake to slip a not-to-be-sneezed-at ten-öre piece in my hand. They would always do this with averted faces, not cat-lug to have me thank them. I never learned how to get through such a situation. Why, really? Ten times ten are a hundred; a crown has purchasing power; why not, then, take the money and be thankful for its Moreover, I

was hopelessly in debt! But I was never able to master my emotion. And yet I lived in hope of learning to accept my ten-öre tips with guileless *grandezza*.

In the beginning I was certainly a curious type of museum guard, as I would always make haste to into myself away whenever any visitors came wandering Into my section. Once I spent two hours in a box of plaster of Paris. Sundays were an ever-recurring nightmare for me, for it was then that the general public came in droves. I would be spied wherever I had happened to conceal myself, and there were certain young scamps who would drop in every Sunday to hunt for me, after they had learned I was addicted to the game of hide-and-seek. My carnival garb would throw me into such a state of mental confusion that on several occasions I left the museum with my hexagon still on my head. For two years I lived in a state of mind which anyone will recognize if they have ever experienced the dream of finding themselves in the middle of a public thoroughfare sans trousers. Whenever anyone would address me in Swedish, I would promptly reply in English.

I said that my remuneration was not great. Even so, it ought really to have been far less than it was. I am unable to discern the reason for my complex, for I have certainly never been ashamed of any sort of work. Possibly the very atmosphere of the museum made me feel like something of an exhibit myself. Whenever, in the course of my duties, I would find myself in working clothes, scrubbing the floors or dusting the statuary, I would never once be afflicted with a mad desire to flee, even when visitors were moving about in my vicinity. As a guard, however, I was obviously a thorough disgrace to the state. I attempted in vain to adjust my mind to the situation, by reminding myself that I was in no way bothered by the sight of other men in uniform. No, it was perfectly frightful for me.

If I assert that I have always been afraid of appearing in any way conspicuous, you will perhaps, at first blush, consider my remark singularly incongruous. Nevertheless, this has been a decisive influence in my life ever since early childhood. Anything even faintly resembling exhibitionism would immediately put me to rout. It was this very trait which filled me with such dire fright whenever, in my early days, I saw that laughing boy on the movie

screen in Jante.

I was in line for a future promotion which would have taken me out of uniform, but it required too much energy to strive toward this end. It was already too strenuous a requirement that I should hold myself erect while wearing a uniform. In it I was always as limp as a rag.

# THEY WOULD MURDER ME WITH LETTERS

ONCE again I experienced what it was like to be in human clutches. Again I was afflicted with the appalling feeling that it was written all over me: Well well, so there goes the onanist from Jantel In money matters it had been bad enough, but what now? Small bills which everyone is bound to acquire in the course of a week or a month would frighten the very life out of me. Always in the past it had been difficult enough for me to open a letter. Now I gave it up altogether. I would hide letters addressed to me in all corners of the house, under mattresses, behind pieces of furniture, in cracks in the floor — and my head would swim every time I would later come upon one of them. I would draw it forth gingerly and promptly hide it away in a new and better place. It would have been better to have burned them at once in the stove, but this I was never able to do. Soon my phobia grew to include all types of mail. To this day I still may come across several ancient unopened letters, in books, in boxes of old papers. Surely the supply must soon run out! I have burned unopened letters in bundles, whenever I have unearthed them, faded with time, from their hiding-places. But even now I decline to open a letter once it has been laid aside unopened. In the course of two years I have hunted out all such old letters and burned them — tracked them to their dens as one would rats or bedbugs. Each time one goes up in smoke, I am hoping to Heaven I shall find no more. Unfortunately in this respect I am a recidivist. It is even now my first impulse to leave unopened the letters which come to me — to stick them in the bookcase, for example, and to forget them without delay.

It is very easy to give people the impression that such an attitude is one of superciliousness. The Jante man, convinced of his own normality, finds it a downright physical impossibility to leave a letter unopened. Therefore he regards it as a strong trait of character to put blue blazes into letters he addresses to others. He is in all ways confident, by extension, that the person he is addressing feels himself in duty bound to open and read the letters he receives. My experience tells me that the police have some such inane idea. When I have failed to reply to two of their letters, they unfailingly send me a third by registered mail. By this device the sender is convinced he has effectively achieved his end — now he must have received it and read it. But I, for one, have never opened a registered letter unless I was convinced that it contained cash or a check.

# IN UNIFORM

THE UNIFORM aroused all my old fears. Always, since Misery Harbour, it had been my practice to alter my appearance every six months. It was never possible to recognize me from one year to the next. Then, all of a sudden, I found myself wearing a uniform. Call it dementia, call it what you will, the fact remains that my blood would run cold every time a person looked at me while I was in uniform: Now I've been spotted! That man recognizes me from Misery Harbour!

I do not know, in sticking out this job, how far I was guided by a so-called perverse joy in this phobia of mine and how far by the necessity of earning a livelihood for my children.

As I would go marching up and down the hot tile floors during those long summer days, with the sun beating down through a ceiling of skylights, my head would be buzzing with many a curious thought, and queer would be my associations of ideas whenever I heard someone coming. A sense of insecurity would stand my hair on end, my whole acquired front would fall away. It is a well-known fact that, through systematic insecurity, one can force minds into surrender and submission, but it is less well known that if the victim is successful in getting to the bottom of his own sense of

insecurity, he has acquired a complete defence against all terrorists.

I failed that time as so many times before. I took refuge in mystery.

# EVE AND AGNES

BUT during that period when every day, in a literal sense, I would march to and fro among the ruins of a forgotten world, my thoughts would be forever hovering about things which pertained to my earliest childhood. Halting before a white marble Eve and observing that once again some poor devil had been at the cold marble with filthy fingers, I would carefully wipe away the marks, although there was a rule forbidding attendants to do such a thing. I would stare up into her serene face and recall a warm and vibrant Eve who had received her marks in Misery Harbour, and I would remember Agnes, my sister. I thought of Rose, who lived far, far away in Fairyland, and, in a land still farther away, of a baby boy at a woman's breast. And into my heart a heavy stillness would creep and my thoughts would steal still farther back to the blessed death before I encountered myself through Father and Mother — and even farther back to the enormous white plains where, in a remote corner, time sits alone with its pain.

# I SOAR ON THE WINGED HORSE

OR I would have a sense of being a blackened criminal as I stood studying the privy-paintings of the Etruscans who once sacrificed splendid colors and a wall to the same sort of thing boys now draw in places where they relieve nature. A book should be written on tile subject of backhouse art. Scholarship always furrows its brow and assumes an expression of profundity whenever it turns to the Etruscans, but never has profundity borne even slightly upon truth. Go to the toilet and get wise to Etruscan art. I soar on the winged horse high over the Nile.

# WITHOUT COURAGE TO CONFESS

AND the nights! I was never able to sleep soundly through the night at that time, but would be constantly awakened by fantastic nightmares. I would dream of being reprimanded by my superiors for odd behavior, such as carrying off statues and mistreating small children in dark corners behind the figures. I would frantically deny the charges, but at that they would smile scornfully and say that *I was a knave without courage to confess*. After such dreams I would arrive at the museum in an even greater confusion of mind. But often, too, there would be dreams of small boys I had known in the past and who were now grown up — they would throw tin cans at me, and the cans would be filled with cement.

# A FUNNY STORY

IN the museum there was one attendant who was very old, perhaps eighty. He was completely senile. Whenever any of us happened to be in his immediate vicinity, he would buttonhole us and whisper with a smirk: “Say, do you know the one about the tin can?”

He never waited to hear if we said yes or no, but would immediately launch into the story about the tin can. It was one of those utterly vapid stories concerned with a girl’s attempt to conceal her loss of virginity. Each day of his life the old fool would manage to tell it five or six times to each one of us, making a grand total of a hundred times a day. If no one were immediately available, he would chuckle slyly to himself over that funny story of his.

# THE SKIPPER OF THE “RURIK”

OCCASIONALLY there would be people from Jante. And do you know who else stopped in one day? The skipper of the *Rurik*! In one of Kipling s stories the remark is made that if there be any person at

all one desires particularly to see, one would do well to sit down in Aden and simply wait for him to turn up. And so it was with me: I stalked about the museum, confidently expecting the arrival of all the people I especially detested; I was as sure as could be that, sooner or later, they would put in an appearance to see how low I had sunk.

The skipper of the *Rurik* did not recognize me. But he did turn round uncertainly several times to get a better look at me. What a bitterly ridiculous situation! He was unable to decide who I was, seeing me thus in such eminent surroundings and attired in a uniform which was the last word in elegance. I felt safe, for I knew, of course, in all humility, that the Jante person holds such refined custodians as I was in holiest respect. Moreover, it could hardly have occurred to the master of the Rurik that I was anything other than dead. I observed with joy that he had grown stout and that his face showed the effects of alcoholic indulgence. He had been a smart and well-built figure of a man during the days I had sailed with him in the *Rurik*.

I did not turn out to be as much afraid as I might, beforehand, have imagined. What danger there may be of my murder of John being discovered — this is not great, but there is a connection between it and my former skipper. A lucky connection for me, you understand, for he cannot dream that he is in possession of such knowledge. He neither heard nor saw anything of me after my desertion. At all events, it was over him one had to walk. *Was*, for now one may spare oneself that. I have effaced the last sign of my tracks.

For a long time my mind continued to be deeply concerned over my encounter with this man. However, it entailed no disclosure and was therefore a matter of but slight significance. It was far less significant than was my later face-to-face encounter with the master Skarregaard from Jante.

# THE SCOUNDREL SKARREGAARD

HE did not recognize me, either. But leave it to us to recognize our old teachers! I looked carefully at that face which had once terrified me beyond measure and read in it a smugly perverse nature. He had a quick and violent temper and had always relished lecturing g on the present lax methods of rearing the young. I have not mentioned him before, though I knew all along that I should eventually come to him. It had used to delight Skarregaard to birch the girls in his class. In this he was unlike the other masters.

You may know that, fifteen or twenty years ago, it was a common practice for men and boys to spy, when they could, on women bathers. This happens less frequently today, though the practice still persists in remote sections where morality is cultivated. It was during the old days that the frail sex, being unable to swim, would go in "bathing" with much screeching and squealing in order to attract masculine attention. And those were the days when the sea and the sun were worshipped in a spirit of corruption in air-tight bath-houses where one felt as though he were in prison and developed aqua-phobia —the days when a nude figure on an open strand appeared only as a symbol of moral depravity. Well, once when it came to light that I had been spying on some bathers from so great a distance that I was really unable to tell whether they were boys or girls, it happened that some tattler had brought word of my iniquity to Skarregaard. He grabbed me by the nape of the neck, hauled me over the edge of my desk, and treated me to six or seven stinging cuts of the whip. His intention presumably had been to cure eroticism — if not his own, at least mine. The incident reached the ears of my sister Agnes, who made the most of her information, losing no opportunity to rub it into me. But every time she would make fun of me in that connection, I would be subject to a curious trembling of my lips, much as though I were on the point of bursting into tears. As it was, the accompanying sensation was not entirely unpleasant and later I would now and then succeed in producing the same quivering of my mouth even at moments when Agnes was not teasing me about Skarregaard and those girls in bathing. But I was not always able to get the thing going, and I learned to use my fingers to help it along. It was not long before I was constantly tugging at my under lip. Here was another childish foible which bore a stigma. At home I was ridiculed for it and in school, the circle was complete. One day I found myself once again

lying over a desk with the birch rod singing at its work. That Skarregaard was surely a devil! He fully resembled a childish conception of Satan.

His whippings proved of no avail. I continued; in deepest disgrace I continued. I was unable to let my mouth alone. Everyone scolded me for it and said that it was a vile habit, that my lips would grow long as a consequence and — what ever did they not say! The master Skarregaard would stand up in front of me, pull down his long repulsive lips, and the class would howl with laughter. So I would hie[8] me away to perform the act in secret.

The persecutions continued and in the course of a couple of years they came out victorious. Victorious? Naturally not! Never is anything victorious which attacks childhood development with violence. I let my lips alone and discovered a substitute, for which I hope Skarregaard may broil in hell...

With my hexagonal cap on my head, I sauntered about Skarregaard, who gave me credit in his mind for being a judge of people and who was himself under the impression that he was an important personage. He assumed his vilest expression of classroom importance and began studying art with the air of a connoisseur. He would shade his eyes, squint through his fist, and nod reflectively, cutting a wretched figure for the edification of so elegant a custodian as I. When he momentarily turned away from me, I immediately raised two fingers to my lower lip and felt like slaying him there on the spot.

This had been a meeting between the lusts of the flesh and life's hauteur.

[8] *hie* : intransitive verb : to go quickly : hasten

# THE LAST PORTAL

DREAD develops an infamously sharp vision. During my days in the museum I became a dreamy infant with reasoning powers as sharp as razor blades. But, for the God knows which time, I was brought to a standstill and thrust fair in the middle of a crisis. The end of it

was that I was again driven to cross the Atlantic by forces of mysticism and obscurantism. I had returned to a state of childhood, was as deep down into it as I had been able to penetrate, and it was less life than death I sought in Canada. But I found something else; I advanced closer to the truth than ever, and when I returned, the crisis was full in the offing again. I had brought new regions under the sway of my knowledge and once again I was off on my merry way. I have spoken of this before — I still believed I might find help in others, but I found only enemies.

Quite by chance, I entered through the last portal —that of a temperance society! The bottle had been my childhood's Satan, and by taking up the cudgel against the bottle I at once put myself back in the thickest of all my childhood's battles. It was like uncovering a beehive. There was still a long way to go, but there was no longer any way back. In my fight against the bottle — against the Devil himself, thus — I learned all there was to know about human maliciousness, the outrages human beings perpetrate against each other and against themselves — stood eye to eye with the bare and gleaming face of the terror.

And I came here to Norway in order to renounce all that had happened up to that point in my life, to begin all over again, a foreigner, the Flying Dutchman who had come ashore. But I saw that there exists no form of renunciation other than comprehension. I have no other gods, no other dreams before truth, truth, always more truth.

# FOCAL VISION

I WILL tell of my decisive flight from Dante — not my last, but that which made me homeless.

Many other things I believe I shall introduce while I am at my tale, for I am in motion like — like a tree I once saw, soaring off across the land and trailing its roots behind it. Yes, it is the sort of thing no one believes to be possible, though it actually happened. Perhaps it had become dissatisfied with the soil where it was growing. I must tell you this story in order to convince you that others than I can

see something improbable. And this other person who saw the same thing I did was neither a fugitive nor a gifted psychopath. He was a primitive raw-boned farmer from Jærener!

One day in late September we had driven in an old Ford car from Winnipeg to Lake Manitoba to shoot ducks. It was a sixtyfive-mile drive. We got four rabbits, but no ducks. It was night when we started back home, and mists hung low in the hollows. Not far from a large town called Portage la Prairie, there is a little wayside station known as Poplar Point, and it was there we stopped for gas. We were unable, however, to arouse a soul to work the pump. Hoping that what gas we had left in the tank would get us to Portage la Prairie, we cranked the engine. Just as my friend from Jærener was about to start the car, we heard a low cracking sound from the yard surrounding the house. We turned our heads — and were paralyzed by what we saw. A tall foliage tree in the yard had slowly begun to sway from side to side. After a few moments it lifted itself up out of the ground with an enormous lump of soil clinging to its roots and began floating away. I looked at the Jærener. He looked at me. “Do you see something?” I asked. “Do you see something?” he asked. “Yes,” I said, “I see a tree which has pulled itself out by the roots.” “That’s just what I see, too,” he said, “but, of course, you must be crazy!”

Then the tree lifted itself a bit higher above the ground and soared off across the earth into the distance beyond the house. At length it vanished below the horizon. We had to convince each other that we still had some nerve left and raced over to the yard. There we found a fresh cavity in the ground where the tree had stood. But the tree itself had disappeared out across the prairie.

“We better be driving home,” the Jærener said. And that we did. But in Winnipeg we had to hear one thing or another about the strong water in Lake Manitoba when we reported having seen that soaring tree. I am still irritated whenever anyone tells me it is all a lie. For there has never been anything more truthful in all this world. Once I met a man who waxed vastly enthusiastic over my account, for it was obvious, he said, that the perener and I had together achieved focal vision. When we both, from a definite distance, had at the same time looked at a tree, it had been

compelled to shift its position in order that the triangle existing between the tree, the Jærener and me might achieve a different angular sum. After this exercise in geometry, I imagine that even the problem of squaring the circle could be solved with the aid of a Jærener!

NOTE. — In this, the American edition of my book I am obliged to add: Several persons have criticized me for failing to give an explanation of the phenomenon of the soaring tree, and certain individuals felt that the question of a cyclone was involved. It was not. The weather was still and misty.

I have never myself come upon a sensible explanation. -E. A.

# REBELLION

IT is refreshing to tell a strange tale, and ply sense of being a soaring tree has nearly passed.

School was, from beginning to end, only humiliation and violence. To what extent it was this is most apparent in the fact that it has taken me twenty years to learn how to hold up my head.

But toward the close I managed an insurrection, which was the first attempt of a series. It was the master Skarregaard who had entered the classroom for the purpose of accusing me of one thing or another. Though I had not committed the deed in question, the mere fact of a false accusation would hardly, under normal circumstances, have affected me particularly. But this time I flared up on the instant and shrieked that it was a lie. All the boys crouched low in their seats from fright, all looked down, no one ventured to look either at Skarregaard or at me. His limbs trembling with anger beneath him, he came toward me, but before he could utter another word, I screamed at him again that it was a lie, this time adding the positively incredible: “You’re always sticking your nose into my affairs, but you can just mind your own business!”

He fastened his claws on my neck as was usual with him, but on that day I was another person entirely — no Whipping resulted this time. Instead the fur flew as we fought each other tooth and nail. I

was a husky lad of thirteen. Such a boy is far stronger than even he himself realizes and much swifter in his motions than a man past forty. But obviously, in the end, he gained the upper hand and sent at once for the principal. For three or four hours I was left locked up in a room alone. But I did not relax. On the contrary! When they sent for me to mete out my punishment, I was still blind with fury. Nevertheless, I went along peaceably and stood quietly while the principal swung the birch rod. When he was finished, I again did the incredible thing: I marched straight out of the classroom. The principal yelled after me to ask where I was going, whereupon I broke into a run and shook the whole building as I slammed the door behind me. Here was the first time throughout my whole school career that I had felt myself suddenly free from teacher-dread. Hurling epithets over my shoulder, I ran — up the stairs, not down, and out of the building! I was hysterical, but strangely clear of head, and all the time I kept wondering to myself why on earth I had ever felt afraid of a teacher. Wild commotion pursued me up the stairs, but I streaked aloft like a cat, all the way up to a place under the roof where some workmen's tools were lying about. There I picked up an ax and made the chips fly as I began chopping at the wall. With a roar, the principal arrived and flung himself upon me; Skarregaard lent him a hand and together they hammered me into submission, howling that I was a ruffian and a bandit. I spat forth invective as they held me down, vowing that some day I'd see that hell was whaled out of them both, just wait!

More help arrived and there was much rumpus before it occurred to someone that I must have been ill. They all accepted this explanation immediately, and when the teachers calmed down, my own emotion cooled. I do not recall whether the affair had further consequences or not.

It is thoroughly apparent to me that human development is always transitional, but that it is commonly regarded as a constant and therefore stupidly subjected to restraint. Therefrom springs all rebellion and all controversy.

# FORTH INTO THE DARK

MY first departure from Jante had not been in the nature of a flight. On that occasion I had left home, more than anything, that I might be left to my own devices in the matter of losing flesh for the purpose of later returning a conquering Adonis. A frail attempt only, after the hoax of confirmation, and resulting in pitiful failure. I was firmly convinced at that time that the test of personal victory is the figure one cuts on the streets of Jante. After I had been away for a time, I was to return and appear as an eminent personage who had had an experience.

When for the second time I set forth, and ended by going to sea, it was not with the notion of returning home a hero. This time it was flight pure and simple; I had been obliged to go away in order that no one should see what an impossible, ineffectual fellow Espen Arnakke was. I no longer believed in victory for myself, either in Jante or anywhere else. I had lost and would hide my face.

I abruptly reached a decision and eight days later I was in another town, in search of a berth on some ship, after having run away, if not in fact, in spirit nevertheless. And I continued to lose, eternally to lose.

I have never had any taste for the sea. None whatever. Quite the contrary. But always without fail I have managed to find myself in the very midst of conditions I had by no means desired to bring about.

One of my most sorrowful and desolate memories is that of my sojourn in that strange town during the period I was waiting for a ship which would sign me on. It was March and bitterly cold, a time of black frost, when the streets were a-swirl with dust and the frozen dung of horses, I went wandering about, frozen with the cold, utterly dejected, an outcast. The bay was full of drift ice; no sailing vessel was scheduled to clear and I refused to go to sea in a steamer. Steamships seemed, as it were, too refined — they carried too many people on board and the very thought of them frightened me. Return home? Never! Once, on a later occasion, I found myself wandering the streets of Copenhagen in the biting cold, only in coat and trousers and shoes and without so much as a roof over my head, but even that experience seemed less trying, although it must really have been far worse, for I was then so hungry I was unable

even to think and, to make matters worse, one of my buttocks was inflamed as the result of a bullet wound from a revolver... I likewise spent several days in jail at that time. Vestre Jail, they call it. I was released without charges, for I had, by the way, committed no offense, though that phase of the matter seemed in no way novel to me — it had always been thus in school... But, as I said before, even this later episode was less trying than was my first experience of feeling myself an outcast as I went about in search of a berth — with food on the table before me each day, warm clothes to put on, and an adequate room to sleep in. I lived an empty existence, went wandering about alone, and was far away from Jante. An umbilical cord had been severed, and that but recently. My heart was a sea of despair...

My departure from Jante I am still able to live over in fancy — the morning was stormy and laden with frost. Alongside the ship stood my parents, together with Einer. He had a cigarette hanging from one corner of his mouth and had sought shelter from the cutting wind behind a shed. He glanced up at me and allowed his gaze to sweep the ship from stem to stern. He shook his head. He was used to strange behavior on the part of his parents and younger brothers. Of this Einer was himself never guilty. Always he has reminded me of an elf of light. His was a peace-loving nature and he would always shrug his shoulders at all family carryings-on. It was impossible to get anywhere with Einer. He would accept familiarity without visible reaction; like Vilfred Kraakevinge, he was not to be won over by either kindness or criticism; he was consistently cordial and always minded his own business.

The ship departed. There was a gale, and the sea was breaking over the drift ice. I remained for a long time on deck and gazed inshore at the shadows of the coasts about Jante, now dim behind a ghostly blanket of swirling dust and snow. It ought to have been spring, but it was winter and I saw the entire world before me as a bleak and sober Harbour filled with nasty drift ice. With my eyes I clung desperately to the vanishing shoreline, the hills raising their curved domes to a gray and lowering sky, and all dreams fell, shot through the wing, down through the raw wintry morning, down into an ice-cold world which was never to see summer again.

The familiar tracts dropped from sight, and my heart felt chill and homeless. You may call me sentimental or what you will, but it is still to this day the wonder of my life that I ever survived that uprooting of myself from Jante. For the boy standing that day on the ship and gazing off at the vanishing land well knew that all hope and vision, all life-and-death desires, had, by a mysterious umbilicus, been bound to those places which were a part of his childhood. He was now leaving these places behind, and, as a result, he stood there a broken-down man.

Today Jante has vanished in the depths of the sea, but in this way do we love the places where we have suffered. And later on I developed an affection for Newfoundland, my second fairyland, that barren island in the Atlantic, for the very reason that my tragedy came to full fruition there. Strife and hatred and the bond which links us to those closest to us in life are the explosive core in the deceptive lyricism of all nationalistic feeling and of all Patriotic commitment. I will have nothing of beauty! For me, it is only a question of living cleanly on the hard and barren things of life.

In a kind of trance I moved about in that strange town. I was dimly aware that I ought to saunter forth and see something of the place — that was, after all, expected of people. Discouraged, I sat in my room and thought but one thought: “What am I doing here? These houses and these streets are cold and strange... ”

I was an outcast, I had been placed without the circle of life. Here were no faces I knew and a sea voyage seemed uninviting. The sea was only a desolate expanse.

My last illusion crashed with the realization that I had brought my body along with me. It was another thing to sit at home, giving wings to one’s fancy. Now I discovered that my body had accompanied me here. Here one does not soar on the wings of the dawn; here one moves one’s limbs and carries a package of food under one’s arm. What becomes of the dream when we no longer find our-selves in the place where it was conceived?

# THE BOTTLE FIRST AND LAST

Is it possible to imagine a more bitter irony than the fact that both Mother and Father continued to impress upon my mind up until the last moment before the ship put out from the dock in Jante that everything was all right if only one refrained from drinking alcohol? With empty eyes I stared at them. What was it they were saying? Had my existence up until that point been *all right?* Theirs was a dreary religion. I once heard of a chiropractor who attempted to cure a man of an abcessed kidney by pommeling him in the back with his fist, and even in court the chiropractor insisted that this form of treatment had been necessary. There has always been a deal of drinking in the world, but never before did drunkenness reach the dangerous point it did in the course of the past two generations, and this may be laid to the door of the temperance group. Any effective means of wiping out intoxicating beverages must depend upon some radical rearrangement of the forms of human community life as they now exist. The bottle will be emptied or cursed or both just so long as we all continue to make war on each other.

But they said to the young bankrupt who stood there in mortal despair that if only he would shun the bottle, everything would be all right. He thought: “Nothing is right. They talk altogether too much about the bottle.”

# FILTH

WHEN at last I found a berth, it brought me no sense of relief. I was afraid. What was it really like to be at sea in a ship? I had grown up in a seaport town, I had rowed and sailed and played aboard vessels in the Harbour, and I had known plenty of seafaring men. But, even so, I still preserved in my mind the Marryat version of the sea. That other, that was only Jante. Away from Jante I maintained to the last a belief that the sea was as Marryat had described it. As a barker for empire he out-shines Rudyard Kipling a hundredfold, because his was such a naïve fraud.

With growing force I was struck by the wide separation between dream and actuality, due to the fact that my first berth aboard ship turned out to be so utterly unfortunate.

I had jumped at the first chance which offered itself to me, in order not to be obliged to return home to Jante.

The vessel was the *Ragnar*, a brigantine hailing from the port of Gavle. The Lord only knows whether she is still afloat on the bounding blue, for she drank in water like a rag. All essential labour centered around the pump. I was stationed there, and I believe that I pumped half the waters of the Baltic in through the vessel's rotten planking and back by the board. Our cook was a strumpet who shared the skipper's bunk and who used to hang her filthy drawers over the soup kettle to dry. Much liquor was swilled down in the course of the voyage, and the cabin was perpetual slops of booze and puke and urine. The food was rotten, the people aboard rotten, and the vessel itself was rotten and crawling with fleas and lice and bedbugs.

I performed the feat of actually remaining sober in such a swilldump for two full weeks, but in the end I took to the bottle, since such a life seemed intolerable seen through the eyes of sobriety. I drank until my head spun round.

Where did I go in that seagoing coffin? I visited Bornholm, I was in Stettin a few times, and I remember a beautiful spring day on the Oder. We touched Finland at a place called Raumo, but everything I saw was veiled in a mist of intoxication. The skipper was a swine, and the mate was even stupider than Uncle Frederik. They would drink and fight each other and indulge in sadism with the cook to such an extent that her howls of torment could be heard far out across the Kattegat. The *Ragnar* was a phantom ship manned by human refuse.

Even so, I had a better time of it aboard her than I did on many a later occasion. I had enough courage to fight. Once I even ventured to attack the mate. I was able to hold my own in the fo'c'sle. For there was none on board mighty enough to wield a greater terror than that contained in his arms, and of such I have never stood in awe, not even when I happened to be the weaker. I have always been most afraid of a look from people who knew me.

Really, I must describe for you the band of Calibans sailed with in the *Ragnar!* Carlsson, the sallow Swede from Oland, a desperate

frothing scorpion! And Alm —he was from Stockholm, flabby and stupid, with arms like joists! He and I would batter each other every day till our ears and teeth hung loose. He was forever shooting off his mouth about little girls of thirteen or fourteen —they would stealthily follow him about, fling themselves at him, and ask him if he would — ? He resembled Latter-frosken and it was a luxury to dislocate one's fingers in contact with that gleaming armored face of his. Jumbo was a Dane, a treacherous little thieving soul, and Frederiksen was from Kristiansand, Norway, a spiteful sub-human creature with a nose and ears full of sores. The glories of a Pan-Scandinavia right there in the fo'c'sle!

One morning when I awoke, I found myself lying in the graveyard in Ronne; not only was I suffering from a hangover, my pockets were empty. For a long time I was no better off — if anything, worse, in fact. But, for the time being, the weather was mild. — What? Stick it out? I have lived my life on the basis of a tremendous will to enjoy, that is all. Whenever I happened to be having a hard time of it, I would suspend all mental activities.

# JUMBO THE LEPER

THE *Ragnar* had left. But a certain member of her crew was to arise as something of a fateful figure be my life. That was Jumbo. I believe I should to this day e able to recognize him were I ever to pass him on the street. His glance was oily and adhesive like that of a rat, and his voice was like an evil odor. He was short and slight, his head huge and bony, his mouth a semicircle from ear to ear. Those ears — They were like the wings of a bat. Lips he had none. I never cared for the fellow, but comradeship of a sort we were obliged to maintain in order to make life livable.

Jumbo had no papers and was unlawfully a member of the ship's company, precisely like the girl. He said something about having lost his papers the time he had deserted ship in Göteborg, and there was much he had to relate on the subject of the fine family he descended from. But these stories he told were never the same, as his memory was really very poor. The very air about him reeked with mendacity. The matter of his desertion in Göteborg often came

up as a desertion in Ystad, Harnosand, or Haparanda. Whenever we happened to catch him in a lie, his blazing eyes would pop fair out of their sockets, and before we could bat an eyelash he would make as if to kill himself. That was his constant refuge, and he never seemed able to appreciate how utterly ineffectual it was.

Jumbo's was a horribly difficult position, for it was impossible to take his part even when he was obviously entirely in the right.

Of late years, at least, I have succeeded in regarding Jumbo through more charitable eyes, though, for a good many reasons, it has been hard for me to alter my general attitude toward him. According to prevailing human standards, I have had every reason to abominate him. He was unreliable and carried tales to the skipper, the gravest of all sins in the fo'c'sle. He plundered me to the point that I found myself without clothes to put on. That he was apprehended, of course, adds nothing to his credit. And he even went so far as to label me a thief. However, during all these long years I have so often pursued him with my thoughts that today I am forced to regard him with at least some degree of sympathy. Boastfulness and monomania, self-assertiveness and mendacity — these were his home-life and schooling. When the question of poor stock to begin with is likewise taken into consideration, small room for hatred is left. But what seemed really worst of all was that, both mentally and physically, he was my inferior. This I made the basis of positive self-feeling, and the result was that I have always maintained a secretly guilty conscience toward him, which happens to be well founded. I had attempted to get the better of him primarily in order to get the better of someone, but in the end he succeeded in getting the better of me instead. It was, of course, an injustice that this should have happened to me, for I had had both the law and superficial honor on my side. But the most fundamental motives active in the strife as it existed between us actually had little to do with the law and even less to do with the Prophets. I myself stood as a brother Petrus to Jumbo. As recently as last night I sat meditating on my sense of guilt with regard to Jumbo. It had been incomprehensible to me through all these many years. Now it appears suddenly as plain as day. At all other times it had been my habit to discuss him from an absurdly elevated point of view.

What his real name was I have forgotten; I only heard it once, from the lips of the examining magistrate.

I recall an incident aboard ship; I shall attempt to pare away my old supercilious attitude and see what actually happened. Alm and Carlsson sat drinking in the fo'c'sle. Whisky in those days used to cost ninety öre a quart and we always had a limitless supply of this liquor. Jumbo had been at odds with the sailors for having refused to offer him a drink, and later on Carlsson took the liberty of stretching out in Jumbo's bunk. Jumbo became furious. It is a grave offense at sea to occupy another's bunk, but s son only grinned and remained lying where he was Jumbo hauled the bedding out from under the man and flung it out on deck. Carlsson was at him at once, and for a time a merry fight was on. When Carlsson returned to the fo'c'sle, he climbed up into his own bunk, which was directly over Jumbo's. There he loosened one of the slats and relieved his bladder down into Jumbo's bunk. A new scuffle, which ended with Jumbo racing up on deck with a screech and flinging his bedding, mattress, and all overboard. That is a type of revenge which little folk often resort to; they do injury to themselves rather than to the enemy. His bedding he had, of course, already lugged on deck before Carlsson had deluged his bunk.

This whole absurd display had filled me with annoyance. While they were angrily belting each other about the deck, I took the dinghy and fished the bedding out of the water. At the very moment I had succeeded in pushing the soggy mass up over the rail, however, Jumbo came running up and dumped everything overboard again. The dripping mattress caught me fair on the head, with the result that I landed with a splash in the Harbour. This all took place in late March or early April and the water was bitingly cold. I crawled out and swore to heaven that Jumbo should pay for it with his life. My every motive had been, up until then, that of a cool-headed gentleman and an unselfish parent. And he had rewarded me by doing his best to drown me! But Jumbo promptly threw himself flat on the deck, and, of course, I found myself unable to strike a prostrate man... Quiet reigned again and the sailors were all asleep when the skipper returned aboard.

One day in port Jumbo was called upon to substitute for the cook.

He was never known to bathe and there he now sat with ten filthy fingers in the food. For one reason or another the skipper suddenly found this entirely to his distaste and gave the fellow a box on the ear. Jumbo was by nature a highly excitable person, a fact I had never before gone out of my way to consider. He began scream jug like an animal, whereupon the skipper promptly lost what little self-control he himself had left, lifted Jumbo high in the air, and flung him down with a thud fair atop the hatch. Jumbo rose to his feet at once and ran aft, where he wheeled abruptly and ran forward, then aft again, many times back and forth at a wild pace, meanwhile emitting a series of blood-curdling screeches. The skipper, utterly amazed at this performance, stood still for a time and speechlessly looked on. At length he moved to bar the other's way. Jumbo, running blindly, rammed his head straight in the master's belly, whereupon he was grabbed and thrown bodily to the deck. There, held prostrate by one of the skipper's knees, he had the seat cut out of his pants and was flogged like any child.

This scene had always seized me with an impulse to laugh. So it is with all thralls. Six months later I myself was treated to just such a flogging, and that time there was no temptation to laugh! But only in such a way could a Jumbo be handled *in port*, for the reason that he stood outside the law.

Jumbo wanted to die, but he continued to live. Although the skipper gave him money for a new pair of trousers, he continued to go about for several days in his old. Crude was the quality of entertainment we found in the figure the poor fellow cut. Jumbo would squint with hatred as he glared back at us. He did not rid himself of his seatless trousers until after the skipper had threatened him with further punishment.

Once, on a later occasion, while we were lying over at Ronne, Jumbo disappeared with everything I had to my name. He had cleaned me out so completely that all I had left was the shirt I had on when I awoke. The following evening he remained behind in Ronne in the custody of a constable. I had got back the better part of my lost apparel, but in court Jumbo had sworn up and down that it was all his; moreover, that he had no home town and that he had never had any parents. On the other hand, he confessed to a dozen

crimes he had never committed. After a week in jail he became converted and took to singing hymns in his cell.

It was six months later, perhaps, when I found myself on board a schooner which the English were towing into Lerwick for close examination. That was during the war. There we were left lying alongside another vessel and that evening, on stepping aboard her to visit with her crew, I suddenly found myself face to face with Jumbo. We did not speak at once, but a little later he drew me aside.

“Don’t say anything!” he begged.

I gave him my word, but in the same instant I caught sight of a hand-towel hanging from the bulkhead. It was mine. Mother had sent me that towel with my initials embroidered on it. I had grieved considerably over its loss.

Jumbo followed my glance and said: “Yes, I suppose, in a way, that is yours.”

“Why, yes,” I mumbled, “in a way it is.”

“Well, can I keep it? It’s all I have.”

I was flabbergasted. “It’s all I have, too,” I said.

My remark failed utterly to register, for he repeated his plea: “Can I keep it?”

Today I know both him and myself better than I did at that time. It amounted to both forgiveness and atonement when I allowed him to keep the towel. I should have preferred to say no — why should he have a thing that was mine, when I had no, other for myself? If, under different circumstances, he had begged me for my only hand-towel, I should have answered no, definitely no! As it was, I permitted him to keep it.

I never seemed able to rid my mind of that little incident. During the months which followed I grew positively to detest the fellow.

Again time passed and one day we arrived at Reydar fiord, Iceland.

Another vessel already lay in the fiord, the same craft we had met in the Shetlands, and Jumbo was still aboard. All my plans for revenge suddenly crumbled to nothing — just let me get back my hand-towel now!

Ah, there was an experience! Jumbo greeted me in confusion; he was flustered beyond measure. It appeared as though the others were of a mind to give me their hands. One of them gave me a little push, which was by no means accidental, took down his watch from a nail, and said: “A man’s property is his!”

The blood rushed to my head. Jumbo winked and kept averting his gaze. “Hey!” someone said. “How’s the porridge in Bornholm?”

Jumbo had not managed to keep his mouth shut about what had happened to him, but had managed to exchange roles with me. Allow me immediately to place this to his credit: That we should have met a second time had been indeed unusual. That we should have met a third time had been nothing short of a miracle.

The situation was hopeless. My tongue clicked in my mouth and I shouted some meaningless nonsense. It was clear enough the type of gentry I belonged to.

A dark period ensued. It is simple to regard this calmly today, but at the time it had seemed horrible indeed to go through. By this time I must surely have come out of it. But a sense of guilt had been for some time a dominant factor in my thinking, and when at last a definite accusation had been made, it had bowled me over completely.

The course of my life was strangely up and down during those days. There were certain periods when I felt myself safe and serene, but others when I had again lost faith in myself. But I believe that, in the main, I was definitely on my way out of the woods, straight up until the time

I was mustered aboard the *Rurik* in Copenhagen.

# KING ALCOHOL

I HAVE had a good deal to say on the subject of drink and I shall return to it once again, for I did considerable drinking while at sea. However, this was inebriation of a different type from before; here it was permissible and therefore comparatively innocent. There no longer existed any taboo to urge me on to intemperance. I was by no means a sot in the genuine sense I had been as a fourteen-year-old in Jante. Drink is really many things, varying from person to person and from place to place. Not until now have I been able to see through one phase of my use of intoxicants back home in Jante: The lad who drank himself gloriously drunk there appeared more the man for it, but he was something more, for the bottle gave him a powerful defense behind which to hide his callowness and his incapacity for women. In a world which seems determined to stuff itself full of lies, much has been written and said about alcohol's stimulating effect upon the sexual urge, although most men know this to be sheer poppycock, and many actually make practical use of alcohol's diametrically opposite effect. A man who is intoxicated immediately disqualifies himself by becoming impotent. This the boys in Jante were aware of; they recognized the truth because the truth here served their purpose: "I was here and I was there and I got myself drunk as a lord. Then I met Petra and we went off into the woods together. But nothing came of it, because I had been drinking."

There one stands with the palm of victory! *Because I had been drinking!* — Like a regular fellow!

But one will never, on the other hand, give up the notion that alcohol strengthens the sexual impulse, for the reason that this fits in perfectly with a whole series of conceptions born of dread, with the result that the fight against alcohol appears actually as a camouflaged sex-blockade. With naïve insistence one points to the aggressive behavior of the inebriate, but asexual authors and drunken people are the only ones who go on fabling of conquests — we others conquer nothing; we merely walk away and put our heads together.

It is about time for us to revise our conception of the story of Lot and his two daughters. As it stands, it is the girls who must shoulder the blame; it has ever been thus. But in the condition in which Lot,

according to the legend, must have been, he could not have sired a family, great or small. In all probability it was he himself who had put the whole notion into his daughters' heads during their hours alone together in their mountain cave: "Here is a curious thing," he must have said, "but a man never knows what he does when in his cups." And he probably repeated his remark so frequently that the minds of the girls began to work. And it was always when they believed the fellow was drunk that he appeared to them most tempting. Perhaps they saw through the business to a certain extent, or possibly they did not, but, in any event, they brought wine in unto him which he did not spill out upon the ground, for Lot was a practical man. In secret he poured the wine back into the stone jug he kept in reserve. And afterwards he lay down like any tanked-up toper with the result that, next day, his conscience was as clear as could be... Am I telling you a repulsive story? I consider the traditional one even more repulsive. The depth of falsification and serviceable villainy encrusted about the subject of sexuality appears to me considerably worse than the matter itself. Consider, for example, the demand for virginity; at one time but a politico-agrarian affair, it has now sunk to the level of being an urban prejudice — often associated even with culture! A *pure* woman must bear my children! Whether a pure man sire them or no is a matter of far less consequence. We have preserved our demand for virginity because it serves the man in his eternal dread of appearing small and second-rate. The woman he marries must be ignorant and without previous experience, in order that she may have no basis for comparison. This miserable anxiety has become crystallized in law and in art, and the impotent man has escaped with the laurels.

# I NO LONGER KNOW WHO I WAS

HE who has warred most vehemently with his close relatives becomes entirely asocial upon tearing himself free from the soil of home. Like a stoppered bottle, he is buffeted about by life's seething surf. Life, for him, has neither beginning nor end. Having disengaged himself too madly from the blood-feud raging at home, he soon realizes that, outside the circle of fraternal combat in Jante,

the world is empty indeed. Everything is of one flavor to his taste, nothing seriously attracts him. And when all seems equally good and all seems equally poor, he takes the line of least resistance, which inevitably leads downward. So it led with Eivind Harre; so it led with me. But I killed a person, and my gyrations through the world became even wilder than before. The end of it all, in my case, was that I reached beyond mere blood-revenge and became productive. If one follows the down-ward way clear to rock bottom, one may rise again with feet on the ground and head in the air.

But before this happens, or if this never happens, it is of no use to make demands of an outcast. He will immediately take you for a brother Petrus and will mutilate you. He has no ambition in life, and your pains will be wasted to hold one up before his eyes. He has no plans. He drifts before all winds that blow. He is without either faith or mercy and he has an irresistible tendency to give up everything in despair. He becomes lazy when you expect fervency, he smites you in return for a friendly word.

Therefore I stand facing an almost impossible task when I decide to describe for you, if but superficially, what kind of fellow the outcast was. I was aware, while discussing Jumbo, that mine is a forged record of those years. It has been colored by what, in the course of time, I came to regard as *salonfähig*, and I have endowed my acts with noble motives. For a long time I had a story I was fond of telling concerning a friend of mine who had committed murder because he saw a little boy being maltreated... Sheer poetry! I never had such a friend! What really lay behind my tale was my own murder of John Wakefield. From this outline I slowly worked out a story covering that period of my life and all that happened therein. I have always realized myself just how it was and I have a singular notion as to how this came about:

Inside my brain a grub is creeping; it is three centimeters long, with the thickness of my little finger. It bores its way about and is always in slow but certain motion; its head is the soft pale head of a child, and its eyes are all the time closed as though it were asleep. It subsists upon my memories of the period lying between the day I first went to sea and my flight from Misery Harbour. Each time it comes upon such a memory, it settles itself comfortably to gnaw

and digest. Little by little, it has found and chewed them all and assimilated each one thoroughly. Would that I might remove this grub and allow it to discuss the banquets it has enjoyed! What a rare tale of adventure that would be! And, just imagine — such a wee small voice to speak the truth, the first truth to be heard in all the world! And I should record the words on a phonograph disk so that they might never be perverted by either believer or infidel.

# THREE PAIRS OF PANTS

BUT let the grub gnaw on further; I shall relate to the best of my ability how the outcast was buffeted about. First, there is a story of three pairs of pants: one pair stolen from me, one pair I was given, and one pair I stole. It has long appealed to me as a rather droll tale. I do not believe the facts themselves were in any way amusing, but the tale I shall unfold may turn out to be a little of everything.

It was winter in Copenhagen and no miracles had come to pass. I was homeless and had made the discovery that one may become definitely ill at one's stomach by hitching one's belt too tight, without alleviating one's hunger in the least. On the other hand, one can gain temporary relief by filling up one's stomach with bits of leather and paper. It is fortunate that one's mental processes, at such times, stop — stop as dead as the wheels of a watch. One's direst speculations present themselves *after* one has partaken of food. Perhaps this is a dangerous statement to make — from the humanitarians one may expect almost everything and the result might be a philanthropic decision to allow all homeless ones to starve pleasantly to death.

Well, it so happened that I met the Swede, Gösta Juhlin. In the beginning we had little to say to each other; our days we would spend sitting together on park benches, our nights warming each other's legs. The human foot ought to be a more flexible and active member; the cold creeps in too easily. As a matter of fact, there is much which, on the whole, might be done to improve the human body.

Just how it came about I have forgotten, but Gösta and I got hold of

an insignificant amount and together rented a little room in a so-called hotel. There we had twenty-four hours of uninterrupted sleep and, upon arising, devoured a loaf of coarse brown bread washed down with water.

I have had sufficient personal experience to state with authority that two can get through a period of hardship better than one. Misery likes company. When two are starving together, they keep each other stirred up with suggestions and maintain life's low blue flame through joint initiative. When a man is alone, he is likely to give up too soon; his mind becomes sluggish; his body, too; his very circulation threatens to halt. Often utterly wild analogies are drawn between hunger and other forms of deprivation; I have read hunger fantasies which doubtless were but shrieks for erotic experience. Deeds of desperation are seldom committed by an individual who is actually starving; such a person steals and begs for mercy. He goes wild, primarily, out of regard for someone else, as when his child clutches at his trouser leg and sobs: "Papa, I'm hungry."

For, even when dulled by hunger, no man can endure the knowledge that he has failed in his role of parental provider. By his omnipotence manna must rain from heaven to feed his little ones. When he fails in this, he becomes morose and spiteful and is likely to prove fractious.

The single man's hunger involves suffering, but seldom is it tragic.

Gösta Juhlin and I reinforced each other and together and we hit the vagabond trail. At five in the morning we dine on fresh bread and milk from the doorsteps in the better sections of the town, to the sorrow of charming people who must later have exchanged many a harsh word with baker and milkman on the subject of their missing breakfasts. At nine o'clock we would call on the shipping-master to inquire if he had found berths for us on some outbound vessel. After that we would peddle shoe-laces till we had earned the price of a meal, and toward evening we would tour the public houses, where we were always sure to encounter someone willing to stand treat for a bottle of beer. We would sit over this as long as possible, and sometimes, with luck was with us, we might be allowed to pass the entire night inside where it was warm. More often than not we had no lodgings to return to, and in those now

vanished nays the cafés were, of course, open all night. I can still remember certain prices; at Pancake-Nielsen's, one might eat all one could hold for twenty öre. A pint of Münonner and a decanter containing five shots came to twenty-nine öre. It was not always so bad to be down to "the busty five-öre," which was current slang for bare existence.

But I have aways been too prone to place my trust in friendship, one morning I awoke in a dingy hotel where we had been staying for several days to find Juhlin gone from the room. I gave this no particular thought at the moment gave way to considerably more concern when, upon jumping out of bed, I discovered that he had taken my trousers with him, together with all the money I possessed — about fifty öre. Later I learned that he had secured a berth and was already well beyond my reach. Here was a vile dilemma! What on earth was I going to do? We owed for the room, and the landlord, considering my pantless condition, was hardly likely to adopt a patient attitude. He was a mountain of flesh and resembled an army tank. I was frightened, but at length managed to muster up all my courage and called for the creature who went under the name of chambermaid. She summoned the landlord, who came stampeding into the room to fill it with fire and brimstone. "Robbed! No, my lad, I'll hammer you flat and tread you into a grease-spot if you don't pay your bill, and I'm ready to begin *right now!"*

This was demanding a good deal of me. He thundered down the stairs after the police. Upon his return he was accompanied by two constables. They sized up the situation at a glance and laughed out unashamed, as much at the landlord as at me.

"It's plain to see he has no trousers," they said. "What are we going to do with him?"

"Money!" the landlord screamed, treating me to a sudden swift kick from behind. With that, my desperation burst all bonds and I was on the point of flying at the fellow's throat.

The constables, however, roaring with laughter, stepped in and held me fast. "Hold on!" they said. "You mustn't hit him back, can't you see that? It may be that you are a crook, but we can testify that the

landlord here has committed assault and battery by kicking your bare bottom!"

The landlord turned blue in the face at such a sample of legal justice as this, shouting that I could go to hell and that he was a ruined man. But the case took a queer turn at this point.

"Go get him a new pair of pants!" the constables ordered, giving mine host a sharp logic.

"What!" the man screamed.

"Yes," the other constable repeated. "Bring him some pants to put on."

I wondered what this might lead to; it had all the ear-marks of extortion. For a moment the landlord stood utterly speechless. Then, without a word, he left the room to dig me up a pair of trousers. The officers said nothing during his absence, so I never found out why he had complied with their demand. There can be so much that is mysterious in the relationship between the police and the proprietor of such a hotel.

But such trousers! They were minstrel trousers, cut the same both front and back, unfitted to any human form or for any possible use. They were of thin cotton, white with infamous red stripes, and at least a foot too long for me.

People rocked with merriment when I emerged to meet the public gaze. At no other time in my life have I succeeded in affording such splendid entertainment. I was called the "white minstrel," a name later used by a renowned comedian. It would not surprise me in the least to learn that, in one way or another, he had me to thank for his stage name.

Well, a day or two later I was taken up by a band of Swedish stokers. They were agreeable chaps with plenty of money to spend, and within twenty-four hours I had forgotten completely that I had not always been one of their number. There was one member of the party, however, who disliked me, a fellow whose name was Jan — Short Jan. The others let me alone with regard to my minstrel

pants, when they realized that their joshing hurt my feelings, but Jan, on the other hand, kept after me and I hated him for it. Moreover, he was stronger than I and would beat me up whenever he felt he needed a bit of exercise. This happened several times. The others permitted him to do so, inasmuch as I was not a fellow-Swede.

The days passed until the Swedes announced at length that on the following morning they would be leaving town. All seven of us were living in one room together and the departure of the Swedes meant that I should find myself homeless in the streets again.

The truth shall be told: During the night I rose, slipped into Short Jan's pants, and strolled forth into the great wide world. There was some justification for my action, when you consider two things: first, that Short Jan was a Swede, a fellow-countryman of Gösta Juhlin, and second, that I left him my minstrel pants. Moreover, I was punished for what I did — it was soon apparent to me that Short Jan's pants were alive with a malignant form of animal life!

But of all this I was not thinking. I was thinking of Jumbo the leper.

# THE ADVENTURER

I WENT on living in such a way as to call less attention to myself. The world proved less ingenious then in hitting upon ways to mock me, but decided even so to provide me with a change: rainy weather set in, rain both day and night, a ceaseless downpour. Every day I would spend as much time as I could in the shipping-master's waiting-room. Twenty times a day he would glare scornfully at me and spit in my direction, but never did he seem able to place me aboard some ship. To this day I can still smell the odor of that room, stinking as it did of sweat and damp clothes. The floor, wet with the tracks of many feet, mirrored the dismalness of the room. Outside it was raining; now and then a human figure, bowed by the driving rain, would scurry past.

Then one day something happened. I was awakened with a start by a shout from the shipping-master as he flung open the door of his

inner office: “Ordinary sea-man! Three-masted schooner *Violen*. Any hands for a windjammer here?”

“That’s me!” I cried in confusion. “Where’s she bound?”

The man chewed on his cud of tobacco and I could see that he was wondering what possible difference that could make to me. “She’s bound for sea,” he said. “How the hell should I know where she’s bound for! It’s all the same to you, isn’t it? Lemme see your papers.”

I handed them over.

“What kind of a silly name is this you’ve got?” he asked.

I smiled obsequiously.

He pawed through my papers. “I’ll keep this rubbish here,” he said. “Go on now and let the skipper have a look at you.”

I slunk out. But, you understand, it was no easy matter for me to bestir myself, if only to walk off and let someone have a look at me. I have heard something concerning the law of inertia. My own case was such at that time that I was unable to turn from one thing to another without someone giving me a good swift kick. Now I found myself standing out in the street, my mood one of the utmost melancholy. Work was in sight after such an uncomfortable time as I had had of it, but, even so, I could not seem able to change my habit of life. It has always been extremely difficult for me to meet new people. I knew in advance that they would only laugh at me. One of the girls of the Harbour brushed past me. “Fish-eye!” she said. I was on the point of falling to the ground. Yes, obviously I had stupid eyes. I had always known as much.

It seemed as though suddenly everything had turned its back on me; the city and the Harbour and humanity in general seemed inimical; or possibly it was myself who had become suddenly plunged in melancholy.

A youth came along and halted before me. “Matches!” he said.

I gave him some matches. “Take the whole box!” I said recklessly. “I have two.”

“All right,” he said. “Got any cigarettes?”

And I gave him my package of cigarettes, which it had taken me a whole long day of tramping about the streets with shoe-laces to earn enough to buy. I had suddenly found myself unable to refuse him. It had been down-right idiotic on my part.

Discouraged, I loafed about, studying what I saw in shopwindows. I really had plenty of time. The skipper would hardly be expecting me on the very stroke of the hour…

On a doorstep stood the youth who had robbed me of my cigarettes; he was in conversation with a repulsive girl who had apparently received a beating some time during the night. I overheard what they said:

“An awful fool,” the fellow said. “No, he don’t look too bright,” the girl agreed. “Homo,” he said.

“Was he after you?”

“Sure. He stood right here and loaded me up with cigarettes and matches.”

“Yeah, couldn’t you see it in his face, though!”

I passed out of ear-shot. Yes, one could plainly expect almost anything of me. Huh! And there came the shipping-master; his gaze seemed to go clean through me. It was awful, and I dashed through the streets like a lunatic on my way to the schooner *Violen*.

Such is the life of an adventurer! Such is the background for his romantic tales! The adventurer is a person who is led about by a ring in his nose; he falls from one situation into another, and, receiving a kick in the stern, stumbles on into a third.

Aboard the *Violen* the skipper looked me over care-fully and amazed me by telling me he could use me. “Come on with me to the shipping-master,” he said, and I followed him at heel like a faithful dog. Now and then the man would drop a condescending word to me, but this served in no way to alleviate the misery of life as I knew it. I dared not run of by myself, but I did give some serious

thought to pushing the skipper beneath the wheels of some passing automobile — I can still see a certain heavy truck as it rumbled past...

It was early afternoon. In a cellar drinkery, preparations for a new night of business were under way; a woman was busy with soap and water, and a girl abroad before her time was sitting indolently at a table over her morning beer. The waiter was deeply engrossed in conversation with her, his fat back like an enormous rolled roast of mutton. I noted everything with painful care. Here conditions were not agreeable, but change for me would be even worse.

I was signed on the *Violen* and ordered to report aboard later that same day. But as soon as the skipper had left me and I was alone, I realized full well that I should never board that vessel. Lazy, sluggish, indolent, listless! I was in mortal fear of everything that was new, even though the old was, by every law of reason, a thousand times worse. I had thought them hard on me when they had locked me up for vagrancy, but when I had become accustomed to sitting in jail, I had felt like weeping over the shabbiness of human nature when they had thrown me out again.

# BRAWL IN THE HOTEL EKVATOR

I WAS prowling about the streets in an effort to forget the three-masted schooner *Violen*. I had almost succeeded, but my mood was one of deep dejection. Then it so happened that I met Yellow Laura, who had been Gösta Juhlin's lady friend. She took a notion to invite me to accompany her to the Hotel Ekvator. If there were sleeping-rooms to be had at such a place, I have no way of knowing. My impression of it was a bar-room some seventy feet square, always packed to the doors with drunken sailors. It was impossible to see more than an arm's length in front of one for the haze of tobacco smoke. Enthroned behind the bar sat the prodigiously stout prop of the place, his colossal paunch, like a sack of proprietor hay, hanging unsupported from his pelvis.

At a table in one corner of the room several drunken Finns were wrangling, and Yellow Laura headed at once in their direction. “Come on,” she said, and we sat down at their table.

I sat there wet and miserable, while Laura promptly fell into conversation with one of the Finns. Bad air is one thing I have never been able to endure, and a feeling of nausea soon came over me. I had no wish to leave the place, however. One of the Finns now began to make indelicate advances to Laura. She uttered a blissful squeak, whereupon she was picked up and laid flat on the table amid a welter of bottles and glassware. One of the men hauled up her skirts and another emptied a pint of beer over certain parts revealed. Tired and sick, I saw all this as though through a veil. With some irritation, the proprietor followed the performance, but said nothing. Laura caught his glance and abruptly rose from the table, shook down her skirts with a cocky air, and walked away.

It was at this juncture that one of the Finns, up until then asleep with his head resting on one arm, suddenly sprang to his feet with a screech, swept his glass to the floor, and offered to murder us all. The proprietor rushed us, gripped him from behind, and bounced him out of the place; the victim fell on the doorstep with a loud thump as the door slammed shut behind him, and the key twisted round in the lock.

“Can’t you folks keep still?” the proprietor shouted. “There’s someone sick in bed inside.”

Outside, the Finn was creating a frightful disturbance. When at length the noise had subsided, the proprietor un-locked the door. The silence, however, had been but clever stratagem. For there in the door the Finn now stood with drawn revolver. The proprietor beat a quick though cumbersome retreat, his fat face contorted by fear. I slid from my chair and, like a rat, scurried behind a case of empty bottles. A shot rang out. My swift retreat had evidently confused the Finn, for he suddenly let fly a shot at me. Without exception here in this world, it is the innocent who are made to suffer, and at that moment it was as though someone had stuck a needle into my rear. I let out a bellow like that of a fog-horn. You see, as near as that I had come to losing my life that night in the Hotel Ekvator! The Finn danced about like a dervish, continuing to

shoot his revolver; his last shot caught the proprietor in the abdomen and sent him toppling over backward. There he lay pounding on the floor with his heels. “Ho —oh, ho — oh!” he bellowed, hammering his legs up and down, though the great dome of his belly remained motionless throughout. “Ho — oh! Ho — oh!”

From a crouching position the Finn began a distrustful bombardment of the cases of empty liquor-bottles. Shattered glass rained everywhere, and with each shot I would give vent to my fog-horn bellow. The other guests had turned up their tables and lay shielded behind them in the very thickest of the fray. Continuing to shoot, the Finn suddenly struck up a song about a ship going aground off the Moluccas. He sent a bullet crashing into the ceiling, began waving his arms, and at length succeeded in shooting himself in the hand. With a roar, he dropped the weapon. At the same moment the door burst open and two constables came storming into the place. They allowed themselves no time to take full stock of the situation, but waded in with both feet. As quick as a flash, they felled the murderous Finn; he crumpled up as though struck with a hammer; after which the two officers went through the place like weasels through a hen-house, laying low, without reference to who he was or what he was doing, every single man they came upon. The spirit of the Vikings is not dead!

Had I really been desirous of deserting the schooner *Violen*? Hardly! If only there might have been someone to drag me aboard! However, when the skipper received a message the next day that he could come and call for me at the jail, he took another man in my stead, and after a time I again found myself walking the streets. But why had they thrown me into the cell for drunks? I had been all too pathetically sober. But by this time I had acquired some distinction of a sort — that Espen, he was by no means stupid — twice now he had managed to get himself let off — twice the police had been unable to prove any guilt on my part.

When I look back on this period of my life, my laziness, my passivity, my stupidity — I see distinctly the fellow then known as Espen Arnakke, a youth who had run away from Jante, not in order to triumph, but in order that no one should watch him sink. The way forward lay already wholly clear and distinct — downward,

ever down-ward, a tramp, a vagrant who would end his life on some dust-heap.

Always may things end thus. I am not one to deny the manifold possibilities of life. And yet, as a matter of fact, I have been through a fair number of years of late which could hardly be classified as years of vagrancy. The dead tree put forth new green after John Wakefield met his end in Misery Harbour.

# THE FIRE FROM ADAMSEN'S BARN

ONE day I was aware that now it was spring. And all that had happened that day seemed as though it had been meant to be: I called on the shipping-master, got me a job, and immediately accompanied my new skipper aboard ship. She was a little schooner engaged only in Baltic trade. My summer in the Baltic was a pleasant one; the work was hard, since, on such short hops between ports, it was a constant round of embarking and disembarking cargo. When autumn came, I left her for the *Rurik*.

But a couple of days before that, I had received a letter from Jante: my sister Agnes was sailing for America to visit an aunt and I might see her off, if I liked, when she left.

Here was a singular repetition of my leave-taking from Jante, of that curiously difficult parting. We stood facing each other like two dead things. The true use of language is something one never acquires in Jante — only a series of verbal clichés reflecting the Law of Jante. So Agnes, too, had had enough. But even though we had never learned to talk, we had nevertheless preserved the human being's ability, at a harrowing moment, to find expression with-out words: Agnes kissed me.

This was a form we never used in Jante.

She was of my own height, a tall, fair, strapping girl, but she seemed so strangely old as she stood there with all her sixteen years, until suddenly she embraced me fiercely, kissed me as no

other woman has ever kissed me to this day, concluded with a little cry, and leaped across the gang-plank.

I lay awake for a time last night and saw again in a vision that gray hull as the ship stood out of the Harbour mouth and poured its volumes of pitch-black smoke into the pale October sky. The ship which, somewhere within its shrinking form, was bearing my sister Agnes away. What did I see that time and what have I dared to tell you now? She has appeared in daylight and in darkness, ever shifting, throughout my life, but the time she took ship for America she appeared in darkness. She returned home not so long afterwards. But when I arrived back in Jante, again she was gone.

# THE HAWK AND THE GROUSE

THERE is a legend about the hawk and the grouse. They are brother and sister, but they do not know it themselves, and the hawk knows no finer sport than that of hunting grouse. As they go tumbling about over upland moors and marshes, the grouse offers pleas in a language which is not its own and which the hawk does not understand, either, for it is the language of the old days when they had lain together in the nest beneath their mother's wing. The hawk does not understand, but waxes even more ferocious, and soon he buries his claws deep in the flesh of the shrieking grouse. He lears at his sister without once knowing who she really is. He does not recognize her until he sees her bleeding heart.

Then he releases his sister and with wild eyes stares about the forest. After a time he flies off and perches on the topmost branch of the tallest pine he can find. He cries forth his lament, and all living things seek cover, both the thrush and the mouse and the moose and the bear.

They seek cover and hide, all the creatures of the field, both large and small; each seeks haven according to his kind....

Then we begin for the second time on earth, and wife and children are the new chapter. But is that other than the old — victory inexorably compounded with defeat?

# THE DEAD MAN FROM MISERY HARBOUR

AFTER many years had passed and I had, for a short time, been living with Gjatrid and the two children in Jante, I still felt as an aching wound the fact that Agnes was not there. One evening, while out, the pain of it assailed me full force, and I was as a man staggering home with a knife wound in his breast: Agnes is not here! I walked homeward through those quiet and deserted streets where the sound of my footfalls echoed and reechoed from the houses: Agnes is not here! Agnes is not here! And then it was as though someone were following me there in the semi-gloom through the sleeping town of Jante — the dead man from Misery Harbour. He was having a grand time keeping step with me and laughing down my neck. Tears spurted from my eyes as we went marching along together, in step, like two soldiers. Those cold lips of his, they almost brushed my ear as they moved beneath his grating voice: “No, by George, Agnes is not here!”

An icy wind was blowing as I squeezed in through the front door, on reaching home. Had he slipped in with me? And I entered the little room where we lived with our two children. I placed a chair against the door, which would not latch, but I did not strike a light. When I crept into bed with Gjatrid, it seemed as though a clamp had released its tight grip on my heart. I stretched out my limbs and felt somehow rescued when I felt the warmth from a human being I did not propose to relinquish in exchange for any shade or spectre...

Agnes, Eve, Gjatrid — it is indeed true that if the hawk does not lay open the heart of the first grouse, success may be his with the second, or the third. Do we ever give up before having reached that point?

# THAT, TOO, WAS LONG AGO

I HAD not seen Agnes since the day she had sailed for America twelve years ago, but one day I turned up where she was living in

the States. Agnes was a lovely girl and the years had given her wisdom. There we sat, we two who had been together in Fairyland, no longer recognizing our own voices. Father and Mother, who had been such great forces in our lives, were gone. Our brothers, they too were gone. The world was bright and autumnally open. The terror was almost dead, the mailed terror which holds us in its iron grip when it has chained inexorably together those who are not to have each other. That is primarily terror for terror's sake, for if we could have our sisters, we should hardly be likely to want them and we should not stand in fear of the others.

# THE ABYSS

THAT summer, before Agnes had left for abroad, I had been conscious of a slight improvement in my condition, but it was then that I joined the *Rurik*.

It is curious that upon meeting the skipper of the *Rurik* long afterwards, with no sign of recognition on his part, I should have been not greatly affected, whereas even now, when I look back upon my days aboard his ship, I may, at certain moments, be struck with sudden panic.

There had been happenings then which had driven me downward to deeper depths than I have ever fallen to since, and to attempt to escape from that dilemma had been like trying to escape from quicksand. And indeed it is but right that I should no longer fear the man, now that there is nothing he can say which might bring up Misery Harbour. The past would prove more troublesome to himself than to me, as he would be well aware were I but to say a few brief words to him. Should he find out that I am alive, he would, of course, lay the crime at my door — I ran away! — but he would not continue long to live in that delusion, were we two to meet face to face. I fear time and circumstance, but not the man. No, to you will never be vouchsafed the final revealing word affecting the events of my past which, possibly because they were so heavily freighted with tears and despair, have assumed such mountainous proportions — I really cannot say. I have met many persons, but were I to run through the list for the purpose of deciding which

ones I might venture to confide in completely — I find no one. And this, for other reasons, seems almost ludicrous in my particular case, for, might I draw aside the veil, even the most consummate blockhead in the world would promptly give in and say:

In the last analysis, he was, upon my word, compelled to till John Wakefield, for the reason that John did what he did."

That would hardly be sufficient to gain for me an acquittal from the bench. But I should like to see the judge who would not quake in his boots. Although — God knows — the idealists are blind and the pragmatists let not their left hand know what their right hand doeth.

# RESURRECTION

IT is dangerous to introduce incidents by mere allusion; one injures one's cause, I know, but I believe in my own cause so implicitly that I am not afraid of injuring it. With reference to what I did in Misery Harbour my spirit is never at rest. But neither is it afraid. This state of mind found expression in a curious dream I experienced not so long ago: I was walking through the streets of Oslo on my way to Vippetangen. People turned their heads to stare at me, but this caused me but little concern. "Let them," I thought to myself, "for my appearance is indeed odd today." And I glanced down at my person. On my feet I was wearing a pair of ragged and utterly filthy gymnasium shoes, and my trousers, supported by a thong, were in an equally disreputable condition. Aside from the aforementioned articles I was wearing only a mildewed shirt, the collar and cuffs of which had been torn away.

So long as I continued walking along the street, no one turned and followed me; people merely stood still in their tracks and stared at me. Persons who were strangers to each other would exchange a few comments while staring.

A constable seemed to have it in mind to ask me a question and followed me hesitantly a short way before he abandoned the notion.

But down by the waterfront I met several people who had often

seen me before. These turned pale at the sight of me and stood still, with mouths agape. And after I had proceeded a short way past them, they began following me at a slow pace. They spoke no words to each other. When anyone would attempt to utter a remark, the others would at once appear embarrassed. On reaching the ship, I had picked up a crowd of followers numbering some fifty or more, but all would pretend to be absorbed in something else each time I would turn my head to regard them. As I stepped aboard, the mate gave me a searching look; he stared and slowly raised his hand to his eyes. He walked away, but turned abruptly to have one last good look at me before he disappeared.

The whole ship was ahum with voices which mumbled and whispered, but not a soul came near me where I sat. The quay was thronged with people, but not one of them came aboard.

Then the entire crew pressed forward as one man to the foredeck where I was sitting; near by they paused in close murmuring ranks. They still seemed anxious to conceal that it was I they were all discussing. But at length one individual emerged from the hypnotic state and called out to me: “Say, what’s your name?”

I looked at the man, for this seemed an odd form of address.

“Where are you bound?” the man called out again.

“I’m bound for Hvalstad.”

At that they all recognized my voice and a stir ran through the crowd clustered alongside on the quay.

I raised my hand to my throat and felt the ridge left there by the noose. How long it seemed going away, for it seemed that several weeks at least had elapsed since my hanging! And suddenly I directed a scornful laugh at all those people; I blinked my eyes at them and sang under ray breath:

“It is sweet to dance to violins
When love and life are fair,
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air.”

They seemed displeased with my song, feeling rather that I had cause for celebration.

Nothing more remains of my former hunted state of mind — that time in my life when all my doors stood open, even those to the nethermost cellars of my soul, where devils were passing madly in and out, like panic-stricken guests through the corridors of a flaming hotel —dead bygone days rushing up at me with pallid screaming faces. But often now I am forced to wonder if really there was anything so utterly preposterous about that episode, for when there is no one else to shriek at, one may shriek at his devils and become bosom friends with them...

# BALANCE SHEET

WHEN a person sets himself in motion, he never knows where he may arrive. I have never seriously believed that, with my monologues, I should ever reach the place I desired. Nevertheless I have done so. Were I to attempt now to balance and close my books for you it would prove a difficult task and I should probably have to begin all over again.

But I have put behind me things which have tortured me and wounded me sorely, and driven me from place to place like an outlaw.

# A HAPPY MAN

WE are nearing the end of my tale — shall close with my happiest memories — I began with one Fairyland and I shall conclude with another.

When I came ashore at Deadman's Point in Newfoundland, I found a hard journey facing me. The skipper had had the sea-chart spread out on the deckhouse roof with several heavy articles weighting down the corners to keep it from blowing away, as he stood there discussing the course with the mate. But I was less interested in the sea than in the land. I listened. And as the chart still remained atop

the deckhouse after I had been relieved at the wheel, I went over to it and devoured it with my eyes so thoroughly that the impression I gained of it has never yet left my mind.

How far it was from Deadman's Point to the nearest village I was unable to make out. I grasped only the general direction and memorized the name — Cat Harbour. That is the English version of *Katten*, the name applied to so many spots along the coast of Norway, being in each instance the place where the cat stands waiting for the fisherman to return home.

There was no trace of any road, nor a single sign of human habitation. The coastline was impossible to follow, for in most places the mountains rose sheer from the sea. There was a ridge of mountains inland a little way and this I was obliged to cross over several times in order to keep from going too far. I spent one whole night up in the mountains and that was no light matter, for I was, you see, almost naked. The following afternoon I spied Cat Harbour in the distance and by evening I reached my destination. In money I had exactly three dollars and a half. This stood me in good stead, for it isn't easy to struggle along as I had for two full days without food. I bought the articles I most needed from the trader, without uttering a word. I am sure that the natives of Cat Harbour will remember my visit to this day! I found a couple of sacks, and these I took along with me; I used them to cover myself up with the following night, but in the morning I left them behind and struck out farther. After a time I came to a speck of a place called Wesleyville and there I paused to steal a loaf of bread from an open storehouse before proceeding on my way. Distances between settlements were great, and neither man nor beast did I encounter along the entire .way — only bleak and barren mountains. From Wesleyville I had trotted about forty-five miles in a southwesterly direction when I came to a railroad. There I picked up a job in a place by the name of Butt's Pond.

The names of places in that part of the world have always remained dear to my heart and I am still able to recall dozens of them — all sound beautiful indeed to my ears. In point of fact, a vile country, poor of soil and barren, but it was there I recovered my lost Fairyland. For I was alone and free as I jogged along on my merry

way; astern in the world lay the *Rurik*, Jante, and all I had known as defeat. Seldom have I ever been on my uppers to the degree I was on my way from Deadman's Point to Butt's Pond, but neither have I ever experienced such a period of spiritual prosperity. You may depend upon it, it was no pitiable figure who let the cold October rain beat against his naked flesh on that journey! I sang a song and devoured the miles without caring whither fate might guide my feet — I had only to hug the coast, and in time some little village would appear upon my horizon with a name to be remembered always...

Everything was worth remembering; I exulted over everything I saw and inscribed it in my brain. I took note of each insect and each tree which fell before my gaze. I was alone and had suddenly become a naturalist again. I studied the maps in the railroad stations and conversed with no single person without absorbing through all my pores every last bit of knowledge of the country he had to offer. I mastered completely the slang of the common man and became indeed amazed when, later on, I encountered "correct" English, which seemed to me an altogether different language. I wonder if there are many Europeans who possess any reliable information about Newfoundland, its forms of livelihood, its geography, climatic conditions, its flora and fauna, and who can trace its political history. Its geographical designations constituted a study in themselves and fired my imagination with a vital impulse — most of these names may be traced back to the man who first arrived at a certain place or who had in some way gained renown there; others are derived from animals discovered in the immediate vicinity. It is a brand new world and the names of the places there have not been erased in the course of several centuries. Deer Point, Duck Harbour, Eagle Mountain, Harewood, Silver Fox Landing, Lynx Cove — those are names which go echoing through the chambers of my mind. And cannot one readily see how joyously the seafarer comes racing home to port when places are given such names as Heart's Content, Flower Cove, Paradise Harbour? But scattered along the coast and among the rocky islands which skirt it, there were not always contented folk who gave names to the places they knew: Misery Point, Madman Island, Dark Hole, Deadman's Point, Wreck Harbour, Witless Bay, Hungry Grove, Despair Bay.

I was forever picking up bits of information along the way. The Newfoundland labourer is a migratory soul — in winter he clings to the forest and in summer to the sea. I listened and I saw. Memory does not deceive me when I recall that for a stretch of several months I lived a glorious life, poor, hungry, and ragged though I was. New and hitherto undiscovered springs poured their pure and sparkling waters into my soul. Exactly what took place within me I was unable to grasp at the time, probably do not even yet fully comprehend. But I have set up a little philosophy concerning it. It is commonly asserted that unemployment and hunger fill the mind with pain, but is it not possible that the very opposite is closer to the truth? When the mind is filled to the brim with suffering, one cannot continue at work — and one believes that one is badly off because of idleness, though one was in truth no better off before. Do not misunderstand me; this is true surely in but a series of single instances. But do people, as a rule, feel themselves happy only because they lead a relatively secure existence? I was a tramp with never a concern for the morrow. I sang a song and let each day be one of joy.

And, you see, it was another form of one-sidedness that led me to tell you but little of my worldly joys and much of the sorrows which have assailed me. I can see how it would be easy for you to gain the impression that I look ill upon my entire past. But nothing could be farther from the truth; it is only that I was obliged to dredge forth those things which in their composite effect could help me. When I observe all the bitterness about me, I cannot be in doubt for a minute that I belong to the gayest portion of humanity, and I am ready to burst forth in laughter over my own stupidities long before others detect them.

My sun continued rising until the second month I was working as a lumberjack in Harewood. Then, when I felt my sense of security beginning to weaken, I moved on. Happiness again smiled upon the vagabond; he roamed about and was neither stupid nor lazy; he no longer shunned the fair sex and he took heart afresh each time he had ventured to look a girl in the eyes.

# THE GRAVE BENEATH THE

# HOLY STONE

I HAVE told you how I must now go backward in time if I am ever to see John Wakefield's grave, and that I shall attempt at this point. There is in it, I believe, something of the mood a man must experience when, upon leaving prison, he hears the heavy iron gates swing shut behind him. What I did I did a long, long time ago.

I have tormented myself with it, I have suffered beneath it until I have worn myself out with reiterating that it was long, long ago. But in vain I seek atonement. I hear everything well-meaning folk will say, what you yourself will say. They will be words without resonance like those of a political appeal in a newspaper.

For when I stand before the actual circumstance, my vindication is shattered. He provoked me and he tortured me; he took the one I was fond of. He desired to see me suffer and he employed all the means he knew.

I had come from Jante, from the *Rurik*. I had felt the desire to murder some person or other, with no particular victim in mind. I was steeped in dread and hatred, I was sick of unrequited love. I was suffering from an old and from a new superstitious belief that to murder was my destiny. Less than an hour before, I had heard Eve wailing and groaning beneath him and he knew it.

At length he did the worst thing he could have done.

Had there been an actual scuffle, had he fallen and struck his head and died as a consequence of that — then it would have been another matter, I am certain. But it did not happen so. I took to the knife and butchered him.

It was two Jante men, you see, who met there, and one of them murdered the other. The one who survived has for many years thought only of building a defense for his action.

The dead man has no voice. Might he now speak, what would *he* have to say concerning himself and the foreign sailor? Now that I have had my say, the dead man ought to be allowed to come before

you and tell you of the foreigner he first met in Harewood and later in Misery Harbour, tell you about his childhood and all his later years, and why he persecuted Espen Arnakke. I dare say, however, that although he is dead and lies in some nameless grave which I shall perhaps never in the world be able to locate, I have, through my defense plea, awakened his voice. It breathes over the tongues of many a living person. The Jante souls know in advance what they will say of the thrall who made good his escape because he did not care for the laying on of hands and who said to hell with their wisdom.

Possibly it is too much to hope for that I should be able to forget him completely. He is too deeply implicated in my life, both before and afterwards, for that. And his death constrained me to think, not according to the standards of sweet folk by means of chalk-lines and sacred logic, but in the manner I now might be prepared to teach. And that has brought me joys, both deep and varied. But it is hard to make an end, hard to locate the final and decisive word. Now that I am fully prepared to meet him beyond the grave, I am also entirely clear in my mind that I may as well spare myself any expectation on that score. When the light goes out it does little good to seek for the flame.

It is for that very reason that murder is the most mischievous of crimes. Life is one thing we must not begrudge even our enemies. By yielding to murder and the will to murder we only establish our own weakness.

But now, at all events, I have attempted to tell the truth as completely and accurately as I see it myself, by your challenge and upon my own responsibility. And there is this evidence that I have indeed almost reached bottom with these self-probings of mine: my taste for probing others is well-nigh dead.

# TONIGHT, TOO, WE SHALL SIT BY THE OPEN FIRE—AND ESPEN IS NOT DEAD

I THINK that should I, rather than John, in the end have gained the one I was in love with at the time — Eve, whom I have loved more passionately than any other women outside the circle of Jante — I should probably be sitting in Misery Harbour today, an honest man, the father of ten children, a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, perhaps even a pillar of the church. And I should certainly then have known very little about Jante — no more than the people of Jante themselves know. In the evening, after the accordion had been put aside, I should perhaps have spoken of a little town east of the sun and west of the moon, and my children would creep up on my knees and demand that I should tell them more of the time when I was a little boy in a land across the sea.

The dream has been realized, but I had first to be struck down, as I believed for the last irreparable time. You took her away from me, John — but what did we want with her, either of us? We both believed that there existed but one woman in the world, and always one possessed by another. But the road to freedom leads aside from any belief in the one and only.

So long as we believe in this doctrine of the one and only we stand at odds with the entire world. Perhaps it is too late, but I have a desire to change my attitude.

No member of a congregation, no pillar of any church have I become, but even so I am not so terribly far away from that which might have happened. Children creep up on my knee and are emphatic:

“Papa, say something. Tell us about the time you were a little boy in a foreign land and about all our different uncles. Tell us something nice about dear Uncle Einer.” If I say that I have nothing to tell them this evening, they tug at me and are terribly offended: “Oh, no, you’re telling a fib! You who are so old and have lived so many, many, many years! Oh dear, you’ve really so much to tell us!”

And Gjatrid looks up from her book with a smile, so indeed there will be a fairy-tale, after all.

And I tell the ever incomprehensible tale that the human being

grows.

But best of all they like hearing about Aunt Agnes.

# EPILOGUE

IN the interior of Newfoundland there is a mountain, Halfway Mountain. It rises abruptly from a fairly level forest land and therefore it appears somewhat loftier perhaps than it really is. I estimate its altitude to be approximately six hundred and fifty feet, and it is a full day's march to circle its base on the lowland. I have been round it while on a hunting trip and it was curious to observe how entirely different such a mountain could be each time I had walked on a little way and turned to look at it again. A thousand different descriptions of Halfway Mountain may be presented to you, and all will be equally accurate. I feel a strong urge to say this to you now: the mountain is vast and many-sided, but the one who lay in chains on the ground saw Halfway Mountain only from the spot where he lay.